

# THE SHORT PATH

Harvey

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VANTAGE

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES AND STATES ON THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

EIGHT LECTURES BY C. H. HARVEY

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*The Short Path: Meditation Techniques and States on the Path to Enlightenment*, by C. H. Harvey is a series of lectures on the art of meditation, specifically on how one goes about achieving the so-called Wisdom Eye lauded by Buddhists the world over. Having himself unconsciously attained this other-worldly state as a young man, he has spent more than forty-five years now seeking ways to consciously arrive at the same state. In *The Short Path*, he covers many of the historic ways Buddhists have gone about seeking a similar path to enlightenment and how his own experiences correspond and can be easily achieved by modern-day meditators. By following his guideline, centered around focusing on the fovea spot, an area of the retina that affords acute vision, he believes many of us can reach a similar transcendence lost over the centuries, mainly through a lack of understanding as to how such a transcendence takes place.

A retired physics and chemistry teacher, C. H. HARVEY's education includes courses in Tibetan and ancient Egyptian religion at the University of California, Berkeley. His hobbies are translating ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts and complex number and elementary particle theory development.



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Meditation Techniques and States  
on the Path to Enlightenment

*Eight Lectures by C. H. Harvey*

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# FIRST EDITION

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## 'SHORT PATH' to ENLIGHTENMENT

'the all empty' (clear light of death)	(IMMORTAL HALF)	great causal body (enlightenment)
8th dissolution black near-attainment Mind		
'the great empty' (black near-attainment)		
7th dissolution sky blue increase Mind		
'the very empty' (sky blue increase)	(MORTAL HALF)	causal body (dream - free)
6th dissolution white appearance Mind		
'the empty' (white appearance)		△ (The Third Eye)
5th dissolution eighty conceptions Mind		Foveal Spot opening
4th dissolution (like a butter-lamp sputtering out) tongue and body senses	(MORTAL HALF)	mental body (dream)
(like fireflies)		
3rd dissolution nose sense		
(like smoke)		
2nd dissolution ear sense	(MORTAL HALF)	physical body (waking)
(like a mirage)		
1st dissolution eye sense		

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*Part I*



## Lecture 1

June 13, 1993

My background is that of the physical sciences—I am a physics and chemistry teacher—and I was taught at a very early age in my training in the university that all thought, every bit of consciousness you can have, is nothing but the functioning of the physical brain and the nervous system, so that the chemical reactions and special nervous currents that occur in the brain are responsible for all of our consciousness.

Well, if you have this kind of a theory, the difficulty with it is that there is no possibility for anything in the thought processes we go through except more of the same. In other words, more of the consciousness that we now have—the waking and dream consciousness—this is all that we can have, if there is nothing but what I call the *mortal mind* or the *mortal half of the mind*.

For meditators, however, all over Asia, Tibet, India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan, it is quite generally recognized that the mind has another half or another part, which is what I call the *immortal half*. Sometimes it is called the *Buddha mind* in Buddhism, or it might be called the *unmanifested mind* in the Upanishads. But the main point, for our purposes, is that there is a more general concept of the mind that is pertinent to meditation, where you are trying to make a bridge, or make contact, with this higher part of the mind.

I started at the age of seven being interested in meditation and the possibilities of what could be reached in the mind, and I spent



the next seventeen years studying various systems of meditation. I must now confess that not only did I believe in the reality of meditation and the states that might be attained, but I thought I knew all about the subject as well. I was very conscious of how much I had studied and understood. I was interested in Zen Buddhism, and the idea of going to Japan and becoming a Zen Buddhist monk was uppermost in my mind in the early forties. But because of the war, of course, this did not take place.

I'm sure every one of you has seen something about meditation, or studied the subject, or even been taught it by someone. But like many others, I was limited in my understanding of meditation to the texts that were available. I was quite unprepared for the reality of meditation or of the reality of what *can happen* in meditation. In 1949, I had absolutely no expectation of having an experience that was to make me realize that this theoretical entity—the immortal half of the mind—did, in fact, exist as a reality so close to you that you could have it turn on in an experience within a fraction of a second and last for forty-five seconds (or less than a minute) and then turn off just as suddenly, leaving you as you were before it ever happened.

At the age of twenty-four I had my first of many experiences that would come roughly about once a month, sometimes intruding on the dream state, sometimes intruding on the waking state, experiences that were clearly totally different from the waking state and the dream state. There are important differences that I will get into later, but right now the important thing is that while you experience these states, you know perfectly well that they are alien. They are not human; they are something totally beyond the human level of consciousness. And this I was not prepared for, frankly, because while I had studied meditation, I had not as yet brought on this experience by meditative practice; I had just been thinking about the subject for seventeen years, and that was all. The actual experience was an accident of a confluence of yogic causes having to do with the right frame of mind, of being relaxed and being

attentive at the same time; also it had to do with an impact to the base of the spine that happened at the first experience, which effectively triggered—in a well-known Maha-Vedha or “great piercer” fashion, according to the yogic texts—an experience of the opening of what is called in Tibet, “The Wisdom” or “Prajna Eye.”

In the succeeding years, however, I couldn't find anybody who could give me information on that *yogic eye*. For the first seven years or so, I would draw a blank on anyone who could give me further information on it. I was especially concerned because the experiences would always terminate before I wanted them to. Naturally, I wanted to find out what was known about it in yogic circles; how you could trigger or generate this kind of an experience and not be dependent upon just spontaneous circumstances. I was ignorant, in short, of the techniques for doing this. And that's what we're talking about now. I've spent sixty-one years of my life studying the subject of meditation, but the last forty-four years have been spent in trying to find the techniques for reproducing these rare experiences.

It so happens that it is possible to use certain knowledge that is pretty well accepted all over Asia, India, and Tibet especially, where there is adherence to what is called the *nine stages of calming the mind*. Such a state of *calmed* mind, it turns out, is not terribly difficult to do but is actually something that could happen even by accident—as it did to me one afternoon in 1949. In other words, it is not something unattainable by any means, and it is not something that necessarily requires years and years of meditating in some rock cave, for instance. But, of course, this has been the fate of many serious practitioners in the East, who, by the way, don't get anywhere.

The question arises: Why is this the case? To my great surprise, the conditions that brought on my own experiences became, in 1954, somewhat clarified. I had an experience in which I learned a technique at the end of the experience for opening up this Wisdom Eye, allowing it to close and reopen again a half dozen times. So, for the first time, I had some real hope for a method to achieve this

condition while in the regular waking state. I was disappointed however because even though I learned something about how to open the eye several times at the *end* of the experience, this was quite different from being able to start it from the waking consciousness. The gap was too great and it frustrated me for many years.

I finally got the idea that what I should do is go to India. Everybody feels that India has all the answers in these matters. So I thought that if I went to India and went around to the various teachers, pleading my case of having had some experiences and trying to find out what I could do to train myself so that I could have some control over them, that I would find an answer. I bounced from one expert to another in India in 1959 and finally got some information from an abbot of a monastery just north of Calcutta, one of the Vedanta monasteries that is quite famous. The abbot directed me to the foremost Sanskrit scholar in Benares and he gave me a letter of introduction to this man. I didn't realize, I might add, that the training I was looking for I had already learned the answer to in the 1954 experience, where I had repeatedly reopened the eye. But thinking I didn't know the answer yet, I went to Benares to see this teacher whose name was Gopinath Kaviraj. He was for many years the head of the Sanskrit College in Benares, and he saw me at his home, where he was surrounded by a small group of students.

I explained to him about the experiences and the fact that since I had not been able to find anything (in literature or elsewhere) that would explain or reflect the same kind of experience, I was beginning to think that something was terribly wrong. But Gopinath Kaviraj assured me that nothing was wrong at all; I had just had a lot of experience but no training. He said that if I could spend six to eight months in India, he knew of a small group that would be able to give me the missing training. Of course there was no guarantee that even if I had gone to such a group it would have been a success. (In any case, I couldn't stay because I was under contract to teach in Berkeley.) But at least this scholar was the first person who recognized my experiences as the state known in

meditation circles as *samadhi*. It is a state of meditation that is, or should be, the aim of anyone who is trying to meditate. Anybody who accepts anything less than the Wisdom Eye as a goal in meditation is cheating himself or herself out of what can be achieved.

There are some in the field of meditation who imagine that just calming yourself, or just tranquilizing yourself, or just arriving at some sort of philosophical insight is all that you should expect. But this is not the case. What you can expect, and should expect, is a consciousness that is unattainable by this mortal part of the mind. It is, in other words, a true breakthrough to that part of the mind that modern science doesn't even think exists, but which does indeed exist.

The primary technique for accomplishing this, as I said, is that of the *nine stages of calming the mind*. And the amazing thing is that it was many years after my own experiences when I finally found out about the existence of these nine stages; yet I found that they represented precisely what I had learned in 1954.

A Tibetologist friend of mine, Alex Wayman, made a translation in 1978 of these nine stages of calming the mind, from Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo* of the fourteenth century. They are the necessary stages to modify, by meditation, the waking/dream half of the mind. It is a sort of tranquilizer to some extent, but it's a very special kind of tranquilization that still has vivid awareness associated with it. The technical term for it is *shamatha*, and in Tibetan the term for it is *zhi gnas*, which has the meaning variously translated as "spot calming the mind," or "calm abiding," or it has been described as just "tranquility," end of discussion.

The problem is that something important is left out of these translations, which simply say that it is a calming *alone* of the mind. Two words in Tibetan describe the verbal meaning. The first word, *zhi*, is an adjective verb "to be calm" or "to become quiet." But the second word, *gnas* has the meaning of a "spot" or a locus in space, like a point in a scientific graph might be—a definite abiding or

dwelling point in space. And this is the key to my own experience in 1954.

I learned, in that experience, that by focusing my consciousness upon a spot in the center of the visual field, that it was possible to reopen this Wisdom Eye within a second or so after it had just closed. So I think that although the translations vary on the *shamatha*, of the nine stages of calming the mind (also called the "nine stages of *shamatha*"), it might be more useful to think of it as *spot calming the mind*, until the nine stages are finally completed.

For those of you who have experimented with meditation, the difficulty is, how can you possibly calm this wild thing called the "mind"? It keeps jumping all over the place like a monkey in a tree. Therefore, what can you do? What technique can you possibly use to facilitate the calming of the mind? Well, it turns out that the center of the visual field is a very logical choice for calming the mind. It is a point that I think everybody here should experience right now.

If you close your eyes (try it now) and look in front of you in the darkness (of what can be called *mind space*), you can see an *area*, which, if it was at reading distance, would be about the size of a marble. That is the center of the visual field. It arises from the center of the retina of the eyes and the connections with the brain. This area is also the center of the mind itself, because the majority of the mind—fully half of the cerebral cortex of the brain—is engaged in processing *visual* information. And so, in a very real, physiological sense, the center of the mind is really the center of the visual field. You know the old saying, "Out of sight, out of mind." Well, *In sight is in mind!* And if you hold on to that area (I call it the *foveal spot*, because the fovea, or fovea centralis, is the center of the retina and constitutes the area of most distinct vision), if you hold that *spot* in the field of view and learn how to hold it for longer and longer numbers of seconds, this will automatically trigger the calming of the mind. It doesn't take any more than a few seconds of holding it at first to be making useful progress. What is important is to be meditating in a fashion that zeros in on this center of the mind. This

makes logical sense because whatever goal there is in meditation has got to be in the center of the mind. And the most natural approach is therefore going to be one that focuses on the center of the visual field. What is astonishing to me, however, is that this is not more generally recognized. So far I've found only three or four lines discussing this particular meditative object—as it is called in one book of yoga. All the other books blithely go on ignoring it and talk about all sorts of other things.

Now, the nine stages of calming the mind end up in the ninth stage, of course. In this stage is a condition known in Sanskrit as *prasrabdhi*, variously translated as "extreme purification," "pliancy," or "softness," which is a state of extreme purification of the mind, an essential condition before one can leave that part of the mind in the waking/dream state. To penetrate or probe beyond that, it is necessary that a final quieting down take place in the visual field.

In the visual field that you ordinarily have (as when you closed your eyes a moment ago), you have a cluttered or impure background, which is filled with tiny little patches of light all around that central region. You have this even in total darkness. This changes in the ninth stage with the onset of *prasrabdhi*; and this is how you know that you are succeeding in the purpose of meditation and are finally achieving the state of *shamatha* in the ninth stage of calming the mind.

Unfortunately, *prasrabdhi* is not a condition that you can control, ever, by your meditative skill. Meditation can only bring you up to it in the ninth stage, and then there has to be a spontaneous impulse from the higher half of the mind, which, so to say, "accepts" you, for it is not possible to run everything from the lower half of the mind.

At this crucial juncture, at the very end of the ninth stage, is this *prasrabdhi*—an extreme purification—which means a purging of the visual sense input that you are still receiving around that central foveal spot or lotus. And what happens is obvious and nobody can ever fool you about it, or confuse you, and you can never



be mistaken about it. Within a second of time—just when you are sailing along like you've always been doing in meditation—that whole peripheral area becomes *velvety black*. In other words, *all* visual input disappears *while you are still conscious* of sitting and meditating. That's what I saw back in 1954 and learned so much from. You will also see the beginning of a Wisdom Eye experience or this final *freeing* of the consciousness. It has to be a freeing and a breaking away from the waking/dream state in readiness for an experience that can only be described as totally alien to our human consciousness. And I mean that very seriously. This consciousness is not at all something we can relate to very well with our present, mortal thinking. It is not really human, and yet you know it is "you" when you experience it. But it's a "you" that you've never experienced before. Up to the age of twenty-four I never realized that as an ordinary human being I could suddenly stop being a normal human being and be something that is utterly beyond our present ability to conceive.

This kind of an experience, then, is what finally becomes possible when this velvety blackness ensues. And fortunately for everybody there is no need to have great skill in proceeding in meditation from that point on. In that magical one second, when the black appears, it is possible to proceed by a kind of momentum of thought, which exists in the mind itself. The mind is so constituted, it seems, that it will carry you from that point on in the next few seconds into a Wisdom Eye experience of some sort.

Now let me cover a little bit of the technique that is involved here in the first of the nine stages of calming the mind. This has to involve a meditative object, which it is possible to focus upon in a way that will produce the desired end result. But you are not going to be able to do that unless the first of the calming stages is focused on the foveal spot or lotus. The trouble is that many meditation techniques differ on this. Many do not involve the foveal spot at all. One technique—in Buddhism particularly—is to meditate on the body of the Buddha, for instance, or to meditate upon the nature

of causation, *subjects*, in other words, that you are supposed to think about. But if you turn your attention upon a whole idea as your meditative object, your thought—or the *power* of your thought—is not powerful or *focused* enough to produce effects. No one has that much power in the conscious brain. We don't have enough power there alone to break open the boundaries to the higher half of the mind. In order to make what powers we may have effective, it is necessary to focus them down to a *point*, or at least to a small area.

If you try to meditate upon, let's say, the body of the Buddha, what you are doing is "visualizing" something. In so doing you are energizing or building up an *obstacle* between you and the higher half of the mind by strengthening the dream state or the mental part of the mind. This kind of visualizing technique is very common in the meditation literature. Also, asking yourself a question or trying to solve a riddle are other techniques.

In Zen Buddhism there is an important variation on this: to get past the thought constructs of the waking/dream part of the mind, the technique employed involves a *koan*. This is a question that you ask yourself, which usually has no logical answer. And so you keep banging your brain up against a brick wall, asking and insisting upon an answer to a question that can be philosophical or nonsensical; it makes no difference, because the intent is to fatigue the mind with this constant *spirit of inquiry* until finally (sometimes after many years) it simply reels back at some juncture, relaxes its guard for a moment, and lets you slip into the ninth stage, where you get a kind of purification that may open up the mortal mind to the immortal half of the mind. *Satori*, as this state is known in Japanese Zen Buddhism, is a form of enlightenment, as is all experience of the Wisdom Eye.

There is a general theory in Asia, behind meditation, which fits all the schools of thought. It is what is called the "four states of consciousness" theory. It proposes that we have four states of consciousness, including all possible consciousness that we can have in our mind. This consciousness is either a *waking* consciousness, or

it is a *dream* consciousness, or it is a *dreamless* state, which is a state of consciousness beyond the dream state and beyond the waking state (I call it the *dream-free* state). This is the higher half of the mind, or the immortal half of the mind that I've been talking about.

The dream-free state is best understood, really, as being the *third-eye-seeing* state. Whenever you have a third-eye experience, or whenever this Wisdom eye opens, you are experiencing the *third* state of the consciousness of the mind.

The fourth state is the consciousness of full enlightenment, a state that everyone is capable of attaining because it is part of the mind that every one of us possesses.

In psychology there is a theory that maintains there is a part of the mind that will not allow us to perceive the truth directly in our dreams, and so it fabricates a dream symbolism of whatever the reality might be and prevents us from actually seeing the true extent of our thoughts. That seems to be partly correct in the sense that there is a definite dream symbolism that takes place at the last moment before entering this dream-free state. But *all* symbols disappear dramatically as soon as the Wisdom Eye opens. I've had about a hundred such experiences in my life, and not one of them had a single symbol in it; they were always totally free of symbols, which are strictly characteristic of the dream state.

## Lecture 2

June 20, 1993

So in meditation, what we are trying to find is a technique for passing from our present consciousness, or the mortal half of the mind, into this immortal half of the mind. And although this is very difficult to do, in some ways it isn't anywhere near as complicated as we are sometimes led to believe by various schools of meditation.

A problem of misinterpretation often arises from the Sanskrit technical terms. For a thousand years or more, there have been certain technical terms in meditation, one of them being this calming of the mind, the objective of which is called *vipashyana* in Sanskrit and is translated as "higher vision" or "clear seeing." This is where you actually touch the other half of the mind. It is called *lhag mthong* in Tibetan. The *lhag mthong* condition is the condition of *third-eye seeing*. This is the best way of thinking of it, but here again we have a problem of translation into an English understanding. It's difficult enough to try to convey the principles of calming the mind when they involve an approach to a totally alien consciousness; but to attempt an explanation specifically about that consciousness, then the problem of translation becomes almost insurmountable.

No doubt, every now and then over the last few millennia, there have been individuals who have experienced this condition or state. But only too often those at the monasteries who became Sanskrit scholars in the area of meditation and others who collectively have written an enormous number of books on the subject

(yet having never actually experienced *vipashyana*) have tried to understand it *intellectually*. And they didn't succeed very well.

This was first brought to my attention in 1978. A book was published called *Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real*, a translation by Alex Wayman from Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo*, or "Great Path Stages (to Enlightenment)." Alex was a friend of mine up at Berkeley many years prior to the book's release, and he was troubled deeply, as early as 1954, about the precise way to translate these technical terms. He didn't do badly, I think, on the calming the mind, or on *shamatha*, but he decided to render *vipashyana*, or *lhag mthong*, as "discerning the real." He did this for two reasons. One reason was because the actual *vipashyana* term means "a type of seeing." The *pashyana* part of the word means, "to see" or "seeing," and the *vi* in front of it is an intensive that indicates that somehow or other the "seeing" is *more than mortal* seeing.

The second reason had to do with a dictionary that was available in 1954, when I took Tibetan during one semester at the University of California. It defined *lhag mthong* as "*more than two-eyed seeing*" (or what I call "third-eye seeing"). The *lhag* part of it meant "more than" and the *mthong* meant "two-eyed seeing." So, of course, Alex took that into consideration. Furthermore, this kind of seeing is incapable of falsehood. It is characterized in all of the texts as a level of consciousness where one is unable to perceive anything but the truth. And that is why he translated it as "discerning the *real*" or "seeing" the real.

Since Alex Wayman himself never had an experience of this sort, he thought (again from a scholar's intellectual, *mortal* point of view) that the "seeing" must have a figurative meaning, where the mental process of realization or comprehension of things in a profound way was involved. And this is pretty much what most of today's scholars still think it means. But I should say that Wayman did break the ice. His book was the very first translation of one of the finest descriptions (and the most complete description) of meditation ever put into print, a text, in fact, that had been very

much kept secret by the Tibetans for over four hundred years until Wayman got hold of a copy and finally published his translation of it.

This book, the *Lam rim chen mo*, or "Great Path Stages (to Enlightenment)," was written in A.D.1402 by the leading scholar in Tibet for centuries, Tsongkhapa. Here, too, the same problem of *vipashyana* arose in a peculiar way. Professor Thurman, in his book *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, tells how Tsongkhapa wrote the *Lam rim chen mo* in a beautiful, forested area (unusual for Tibet), just north of Lhasa; and when he came to completing the ninth stage of calming the mind, he had to make a decision. He had to decide whether to go on and try to describe *vipashyana*, or this third-eye seeing, which is beyond our present consciousness. He hesitated. He was afraid that it would be useless to try to write anything on this *objective* of the nine stages of calming the mind because he felt that no one would really be able to understand it. In other words, he realized it was a consciousness quite alien to his readers, and the danger of misunderstanding would be very great indeed.

Yet it seems, from this tale about him, that he had some visions that encouraged him to go on and write the *vipashyana* section. And he did his best. But his fears of misunderstanding have certainly been borne out.

Professor Lessing, another translator and scholar (whom Wayman worked with in getting his doctorate at the University of California), translated *vipashyana* as "higher vision." This isn't bad. That it indicates a "vision" is all to the good. But this does not mean "figurative" vision, which unfortunately is the interpretation of the present (competing) school, originated by Jeffrey Hopkins at the University of Virginia, in Tibetan translations.

I met and got to know Dr. Hopkins in 1990 on my third trip to Tibet. His translation of *lhag mthong*, or this higher vision, is not very satisfactory. The *lhag* part of the term he translates as "special,"



and the *mithong* part he calls "insight," or "special insight." So in English, what does this mean?

"Insight" means a kind of understanding, but has nothing to do at all with a *visual* experience. You can't make any sense out of it because here you've got this calming of the mind that is supposed to take place, and then, all of a sudden, after the completion of the ninth stage, when you've entered this higher-vision stage, there is supposed to be a change in the way you *think*. Of course, you are *not* supposed to have an analytical frame of mind during the calming stages, but quite the contrary; so this sudden analytical shift in the whole mental effort is very surprising and very puzzling. It has also puzzled the scholars of Tibet for a thousand years, not just our Western translators like Dr. Hopkins. Book after book has tried in vain to explain what this sudden transition is at the beginning of the *lhag mithong* state, which is, in fact, the opening of the Wisdom or *Prajna* Eye.

One of the terms that is used to describe this change (and has led to a whole school of meditation that is widespread all over the world) is called "mindfulness." This is a state of consciousness in which you are vividly aware of every detail that you experience, everything that is happening in your mind, everything that you're doing physically, moment to moment. This even leads to what is called "walking meditation," where, as you're walking along, you are vividly aware of every muscular movement. But this is a far cry from third-eye seeing, and yet you can see why this kind of difference in interpretation could arise simply because the meditation texts describe this mindfulness or *vivid awareness* as being a feature of the *vipashyana* state.

What the Sanskrit texts are really trying to tell us, however, is that when the Wisdom Eye opens, the meditator is vividly *conscious* of everything that takes place in that sacred third eye. That's what they are actually talking about. It is not something that can be simulated or produced merely by our waking consciousness—by being very alert. Yet, as I was saying, there are very large numbers

of people who base their whole meditative approach on that concept.

The Sanskrit term for "wisdom" is *prajna*, but "wisdom" in English has a different meaning. I debated with Dr. Hopkins about whether it was really an adequate translation, because *prajna* is another technical term that is supposed to be describing the part of the mind that is beyond the mortal brain. Therefore, I asked him how the word *wisdom* could give us that kind of an understanding? When you look at the Sanskrit term itself, the *pra* prefix means "frontal"; this is the fundamental root meaning. The *jna* part of it means "perception." So actually, *prajna* means, quite literally, "frontal perception." When we say "Wisdom Eye," then, it means "*Frontal Perception Eye*." What could be more clearly stated than this to describe the third-eye seeing?

Some of my questions may have stirred things up a little with Dr. Hopkins, however, because two years later (in 1992) he published a book called, "Walking through Walls." It is a very strange book. It came about because there was a very highly intellectual, brilliant scholar who had been raised in Tibet and knew practically everything there was to know in the whole field of meditation. In 1979, Dr. Hopkins persuaded this lama, whose name was Lodro, to come to the University of Virginia to explain the nine stages of calming meditation. What emerged from these lectures is the most lucid explanation that anybody has ever given in book form, including the Tsongkhapa work, where the main problem remains in the translation itself.

The description of the nine stages of calming the mind is beautifully expressed in *Walking through Walls*. But Lodro never gets into *vipashyana*; he never mentions what the *objective* is. And much more surprising than that is that he reveals at the end of the work that he himself never experienced the ninth stage of calming the mind. Lama Lodro, in other words, who was privy to everything that was going on in the meditation field within the monasteries in Tibet and the meditation circles in India, admitted that the ninth stage

was very *rarely* experienced by anyone. He said that he knew as a boy (before leaving Tibet) some few men who he believed had experienced it, but that was all. There is an enormous amount of scholarship on the subject, but the actual experience of it may, in fact, be very rare.

Some of the lama schools in Tibet try to explain these states of meditation, and one of them did a thorough job of revealing that there is "something" new that happens when you complete the ninth stage of calming the mind. They call it "direct perception." But here again, *direct perception* may not be the full meaning. It is perception all right, but the word that they are translating for "direct" is also the *number 3*, or "third." Another translation could be, "third perception"—a very apparent reference to the third eye.

But the most terrible obstacle of all for anybody trying to find a suitable technique of meditation is that *prasrabdhi* in the ninth stage has presented a problem of interpretation for virtually all of the present translators. In 1954, one way of translating it could be found in the Jäschke dictionary, one of the Tibetan dictionaries of that time. It defined *prasrabdhi* as "extreme purification." In the new school, however, it is translated differently. Scholars now agree that it means "flexibility." So all of a sudden, *extreme purification* becomes mere flexibility, or "pliancy." I ask you how *pliancy* can ever be a condition that would launch you into a state of consciousness beyond the human? This really is, I think, impossible to understand.

When Alex Wayman was struggling with the Tsongkhapa work, he didn't know what to do with the technical term for *prasrabdhi*. He therefore tried to associate it with something that exists in modern psychology—a catharsis—owing to the notion of *extreme purification*. In other words, he tried to understand *prasrabdhi* as a purging of the mind. This wasn't bad. But, you see, since he didn't have any personal experience with the Wisdom Eye, he didn't realize that to purge the mind of visual consciousness simply means *velvety blackness*. And this seems to have been one of the best kept secrets about meditation in yogic circles for over a thousand years,

because none of them reveal this condition of absolute darkness, which the practicing meditator may know as the genuine crossing of the boundary into the higher states of consciousness.

Now let's briefly go through the first four stages of calming the mind. They are quite easy to understand, and you can actually skip from the fourth stage immediately to the ninth stage, and pretty much ignore the in-between stages because they are simply varying stages of settling down in the initial stages. In the mere act of concentrating on the foveal spot—if we choose this as the meditative object—we are, in effect, directing the powers of our perception at an area within which is a real passage through the mind itself. As soon as you first see this foveal spot and you single it out, then that comprises the *first stage* of calming the mind. To simply *find* and *settle* and *focus your attention* on that internal object (withdrawing your attention from the external world) satisfies Tsongkhapa's description of a virtuous meditative object during the first of the nine stages.

If you then *lock* your attention on the foveal spot and deliberately hold it for even a few seconds (even for just one second), you will have satisfied the second stage of calming the mind. There is nothing more involved than that.

The third stage is quite critical. When you hold your visual attention on the spot for a few seconds or longer and you've passed the second stage, and then you lose it (when it slips away), if you at once bring it back and resume focusing your attention on it, then you will have accomplished the third stage.

The fourth stage brings you to the condition known as *samadhi*, according to Tsongkhapa. Here you must start to *reduce* the foveal spot area previously focused upon. In other words, whatever the size of the area in the center of your visual field, it is possible to fix your attention on an even smaller *point within it* (or *bindu* as it's called in Sanskrit). By doing that, and nothing but that, you are passing through the fourth stage of calming the mind.

The remaining four stages are primarily involved in ever more

skillfully doing all of this over and over again. It is a very dynamic kind of meditation, where as fast as anything escapes, you go right back to it. This constant recentering of the mind on the foveal spot (or eventually on a faint, gleaming *star* within it) can become habitual, easy, comfortable, and very satisfying. And when it does become fully habitual, you are then in the ninth stage. Indeed, by then it is so habitual that it is called "natural" meditation, or "natural concentration." You simply fall right into it and with no really strenuous effort at all; you just stay in that condition, locked onto the meditative object, or that *point* in mind space.

You don't need to spend anymore time than a minute or so a day to get some beneficial effects, but, of course, if you can extend your meditation to half an hour or an hour, it is much better. Each such hour of pinpoint concentration upon the star in the foveal spot terminates with strange *threshold visions* around the partially opened Wisdom Eye point. If you develop enough skill at it, and you meditate consistently for at least the duration of a month, there will be other side effects; and there is always the chance, if you are extraordinarily lucky, for the ninth stage to suddenly open up completely, when you least expect it to. And once that velvety darkness comes, you're not going to be able to avoid something happening. The third eye is going to open within a matter of seconds. And nobody who knows about the experience can ever be fooled because it is not something where you just "feel" a certain way, although feeling does accompany the experience, I can assure you. It is above all a *visual* experience, but also no ordinary experience, for it is a major intrusion of something that is alien to our waking/dream consciousness.

As Lama Lodro explains, in *Walking through Walls*, it is a stage of meditation where the *siddhis* begin to manifest; where all the laws of physics can start to be violated, accompanied by the capability of literally working what may seem to be miracles. But they are not miracles that we can choose, as a rule, for the higher half of the

mind has its own ideas of what we should be thinking about, and it chooses for us what we should experience.

And when the Wisdom Eye opens up, there is nothing of an unpleasant nature (at least in all of my experiences) associated with it. As you experience this state, you are literally drawn inside the eye and feel as though you are emptying out from the physical body into it. This happens automatically. You are then aware of your new body, called the "causal body," which is another term for the body of the third eye. You are then *invulnerable* (and you *know* that you are) to any harm of any kind, anywhere in the universe.



*Lecture 3*  
*June 23, 1993*

To summarize the past two lectures: I explained how I had some spontaneous experiences involving the Wisdom or *Prajna* Eye, as it is known in Tibet, which led me to realize that there was really something to be learned in meditation far beyond my wildest imagination. But I realized that I didn't have all the answers. Mainly, I needed to know how to initiate, or generate, the condition called *samadhi*—a state of consciousness that borders on something beyond our present mortal half of the mind, which we are all using right now. Even as I talk about this subject, I'm not using anything beyond memory of past experience or that which is contained in the mortal part of my own mind. The only time anyone can get past that—including even an adept in the art—is when we meditate. The onset of such an experience as third-eye seeing (provided that the conditions are right) can occur within a few minutes or even within a few seconds. It is, however, a condition that can only be understood by direct experience, for it is far too alien to be comprehended by the intellect or mortal half of the mind alone.

I went to India in hopes of discovering how to deliberately generate this *samadhi* condition and thereby make contact with the higher or *immortal half of the mind*, as I call it, because so far I had only had spontaneous experiences. Eventually I met one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars, Gopinath Kaviraj, who directed me to something called "the Serpent Power" in yoga. I already knew about

it but couldn't see any way to use it, since the texts about this Serpent Power were very misleading, and still are.

I also mentioned that the interconnecting gateway—which is the third eye—and the power that opens it up, would be the topics covered in these lectures. Well, today we will get into this mysterious and very strange power.

A book titled *The Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon was first published in 1919. It is a fundamental reference and well worth reading. But there are difficulties in reaching any clear understanding about the subject, because there are so many *blinds*, or misleading ideas. Some yoga scholars, in fact, have come to the conclusion that many such texts on the Serpent Power have been purposely distorted.

Let me attempt to give my description of what it really is. The Serpent Power can best be understood from the point of view about the two halves of the mind. Just think about this for a minute: I've been talking about the *visual* nature of the third eye, which is lodged in this higher half of the mind. I've been talking about the strange and alien nature of it, of the consciousness that is within it and which you *become* when you are using that sight. And I've tried to bring home to you the fact that it is this superhuman quality it has that makes this *immortal half* a proper goal—the only real goal—of meditation. But what I carefully didn't say is that you can't have a superhuman consciousness level without coming into contact with a *terrible power* that goes with it. This came to me as quite a shock because I had read the Scriptures in India that talk about the third eye as "Kapila's eye"—the eye that, in a famous story, reduced an army of elephants to ashes in a battle. But reading a story and witnessing something yourself are two different things. And this kind of unleashed power is very real. It is, in fact, none other than the Serpent Power.

Forty years ago I had one of my third-eye experiences during which I learned something about how this Serpent Power could be used, and *was* used in ages long past for warfare. But I also learned

from that experience that we, as a race, can no longer so easily use that power for such purposes.

I learned none of this by any intellectual or scholarly investigation. This kind of knowledge is gained only through direct experience. I had occasion for the first time in all of my experiences to directly perceive the power aspect of this thing, and it unnerved me so much that it set me back several years in meditation. I simply was not prepared for discovering that in the base of our spine—in the center of our minds, in this immortal half of the mind—there reposes a power that can literally level a mountain. It is a power, in other words, that I wasn't exactly comfortable to find was right smack in the middle of my own mind! It is all very well to talk about these things and to read about them, but to suddenly find yourself confronted with the reality of it that *close* to you is very alarming.

But before going into the details, let me explain the concept, insofar as it is available in the literature, about this *central* power in the spinal column, because that's where the Serpent Power is. It is a power to be respected, for it could be dangerous if it was possible to misuse it. Fortunately for humanity, just as the experiences of the Wisdom Eye cannot be chosen or dictated by the lower half of the mind, unscrupulous individuals are also curtailed from unleashing this power on the world.

The center of the spinal column provides the main power, and on the left and right sides of the spinal column there are two associated powers. This is confirmed also in the ancient Egyptian texts, which I am now translating from a yogic point of view. These 4,300-year-old hieroglyphics of the Old Kingdom period concur with the Indian Sanskrit writings to an amazing degree.

You can say that there are two locations for this power, and this is a confusing point for anybody trying to understand the material written about it. One location is physiological: in the nervous system, in the spinal column, and in the brain. But that's not where it is in terms of how a person experiences it. This is why misunderstandings have resulted with many schools of meditation,

where attempts are made to focus attention on various psychoenergetic centers, or *chakras* in the spinal column. Many meditators endeavor to visualize some portion of the spinal column itself. Yet the consciousness location of all the chakras (or the centers of power in the spinal column), from the point of view of experience, are actually right straight *in front of you*. In other words, because of the visual nature of the mind, all of the direct consciousness locations are lined up along an *axis*, which can be seen straight in front of you, stacked up on the foveal spot. Therefore, you are literally looking along the axis of your own spinal column as you concentrate on the foveal spot.

Aptly enough, in both the Indian and Egyptian texts, the word that means "on the brow" is interchangeable with the "crown of the head." All they are doing, of course, is looking at it from both points of view: physiological and consciousness. And the Serpent Power can be aroused *only* by focusing the left and right spinal powers upon the central spinal power *physiologically*. The experience *psychologically*, or from the point of view of consciousness, is that the left-eye seeing (which in yoga practice is associated with the *left* Serpent Power of the spinal column) and the right-eye seeing (or right Serpent Power of the spinal column) come together or combine their powers as you focus your entire visual attention on the center of the foveal spot. These two "activators" are essential in order to rouse the central Serpent Power into action. And this central Serpent Power is the necessary power in meditation, just like plugging into an electric light socket; you can't get the light to turn on unless you've got power feeding into it. The third eye will not function in threshold visions when it is partially opened, and it will not open up completely without tapping into this central power, which is triggered from the left *and* right sides. That is the reason the two eyes must focus on the faint gleaming star, or "jewel," at the center of the foveal lotus as a consciousness experience. This releases the central Serpent Power, and is therefore an exercise needed in meditation.

It's curious how I first discovered this myself, long before I knew that it was part of yoga practice. When I was young (in my teens particularly), I had lots of dogs and cats. I also knew from early childhood, just from my own gut feeling, that when you looked at people, if you wished to really see them and reach their consciousness, you had to look them straight in the eye. You couldn't look at their face or something else, you had to look them in the eye, and even closer than that—At a *point* within the pupil of one of their eyes.

I discovered with dogs that if I played what I called the "eye game," they would usually look uneasy and turn away. But when I tried it on my cats, I was in for a surprise. As soon as I locked onto the *small point* within the pupil of the eye of my favorite cat, the pupil immediately ballooned out, became huge, and I felt something inside me, strange feelings of communication with the consciousness of the cat. Then something else happened that was even more astonishing. The cat started to stalk me, slowly at first; then it came straight for my eyes and leaped at me with an insane expression! It was a very alarming frontal attack, with claws bared. I experimented with this several times on other cats, and I always had to back out at the last moment or else suffer injury. But what I learned from this was that there was a *power* I was funneling into the eyes of the cats, and it produced genuine effects. Of course, this was the Serpent Power in action—but unknown to me as such at that time.

Apparently, I'm not the only one who has learned such a valuable lesson from cats. The name for the Serpent Power is symbolized by the ancient Egyptians as a cat. The cat goddess, *sekhmet*, is a word that means nothing but "power," *Serpent Power*.

In the Indian texts there are supposedly ways of activating this Serpent Power, and among them are what are known as the "breath control" techniques. In yoga there are quite elaborate instructions: you breath in one nostril and exhale out of another, and go through a routine in the control of the breath. I never found any of this



effective, but it is nevertheless frequently practiced by yogic enthusiasts.

I did find, however, that this same control of the breath can be attained through a much simpler, much more powerful route. This is another yogic practice known as the "turned back tongue," along with what I call the "death or extended exhalation breath," which is my own modification of breathing.

Although not absolutely essential, these methods can assist in raising the Serpent Power. In this way, as you focus on the foveal spot, more power is being funneled into that center of the mind and you are more likely, then, to open the eye.

The Serpent Power, it must be said bluntly, manifests itself in the *physical body* (or in the mortal half of the mind) as sexual powers. It is understandable, therefore, that some restraint—although not necessarily complete abstinence—is required for the serious meditator. Sexual release is associated with losing some of the power that could otherwise be used to open the third eye, or at least be used to raise the Serpent Power from the lower to the higher chakras. This is the fundamental reason why sexual restraint is usually recommended in yogic practices, and as long as it's not carried to extremes of suppression, it has considerable merit.

But the idea I'd like most to impress you with is that this Serpent Power is a *terrible* power. I had one particular experience that demonstrated what it feels like, in effect, to have your finger on the H-bomb button. It is, of course, a part of your own consciousness; yet it is the immortal half of the mind, which doesn't arrive at truth by logical processes. It is beyond logic. Whatever truth it is that it is considering, is discerned by what is referred to in the Tibetan texts as the "direct perception" approach. So when I say that I *experienced* (in the third eye) information about the actual power, I am not talking about something as a mere vision. My experience was loaded with the direct consciousness of the reality of that power. I'd already had, up to that time, many years of third-eye experiences; so you must realize that it had to have been

quite a profound event to make me stop even trying to meditate for several years afterwards. That episode unnerved me, and I assure you that the power is not at all "theoretical." It is truly the terrible and awesome power of Kapila's eye, and it is capable of reducing an army of elephants to ashes. But it is also the great, pristine, primordial, creative power of the universe, inseparably ingrained as a part of the consciousness of the higher half of the mind. We therefore have full access to it *in principle*. Everyone is sitting on the power of an H-bomb, whether they realize it or not. It is right there in the *midst* of your own consciousness. It is *in front of you*, experientially, although physiologically it is at the base of your spine.

Yet, as I've already said, no one can have access to this tremendous power, unless one passes through the nine stages of calming the mind and the velvety blackness of *prasabdhi*. This means that everyone, without exception, must undergo an extreme purification process first.

I learned something about this in one of the experiences I had many years ago. Apparently, the Serpent Power was routinely used in warfare during Atlantean times. But the power could only be used for destructive purposes if the individual using the foveal spot as an actual weapon could maintain extreme purity. The operator, in other words, in those times, had to be under orders from somebody else, who would be totally responsible for the strategy and choice of targets.

So while it was possible in Atlantis, at least, to use the third eye for warfare, an individual meditator of today must reach a state of such utter detachment from any such objective that he or she is really not apt to use the power in this way. Besides, the motivation for killing or destroying lies entirely in the lower half of the mind, and the mortal half does not possess this power. Furthermore, an individual's so-called evil intentions would inevitably be altered by the meditative process. They say that Milarepa, one of the famous Buddhist saints, delved into meditation because he planned revenge through the use of magic. He tried to develop occult powers so that

he could hurt certain people. But in the end he became a saint because he no longer wanted to harm anybody. He had no desire for it anymore because the Wisdom Eye had cleansed him of any mortal-half urges.

I use the word "terrible" to describe this Serpent Power, in the sense of it being awe inspiring or overwhelming. But also it was *terrible* to me, as a personal experience. I wish I could be more explicit, but the visual content of that experience wouldn't mean much to anybody else, and it is only the visual part of it that I'd be able to describe.

I can say this much, however. It involved seeing or witnessing what is called in certain texts the "fiery power." I experienced, in other words, the ultimate nature of the fiery power. It actually *looked* fiery. But there was much more to it. What I really saw was the so-called indestructible drop, which is the third eye *itself*. Normally, when you meditate, you don't actually *see* the third eye; you enter it and start using it. But in this one unique experience I saw the eye. I saw what is known in Tibetan Buddhist writings as the *indestructible drop*. I could feel the awesome power of it, and it stunned me.

## Lecture 4

July 11, 1993

As you know, I went to Benares, and all over India in 1959. Besides meeting Gopinath Kaviraj, who gave me some information on the Serpent Power, I heard about a mysterious event that was reported to have taken place in Baltal. This outpost doesn't seem to even exist anymore today, but thirty-five years ago it was about thirty miles northeast of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. In this case, one of the consequences of meditation may have been encountered. I say *may* have been encountered, because it is still partly speculation on my part.

The head of the Baltal military garrison wanted to know my opinion, as a physicist, of an experience that he related to me. When I finished the trip I intended to submit a report of this incident in Baltal to a newspaper. But this project was derailed because the Indian government was unhappy with me, owing to the fact that I had unintentionally overstayed the time limit on my visa. I'm pretty absentminded, and I just got a little too absentminded after a month in India fighting dysentery and so on. The result was that I never actually published this, but there's a paragraph here that will convey to you what happened:

At Baltal, Lance Corporal Dass mentioned a levitation incident, which he had seen one late afternoon, toward the end of June in Baltal, and wanted to know whether such an event was physically possible or only some kind of trick or illusion.

According to Dass, he and three companions were up in an

elevated, tilted plateau of grassland, about two hundred yards north of the Baltal Sindh river bridge, whipping a horse, among other things, when a tall, thin, and very old sadhu nearby reproached them for their cruelty; and having seated himself on a very conspicuous chalk white boulder, about one yard in diameter, in the middle of the field, he delivered to them a moral discourse. The sadhu's name was Sivanand Paramhamsar. He was said to be 155 years old, and he was over six feet tall. His home was in Rishikesh, between Punjab and the United Provinces. He was on his way, via the Sindh valley, to Amarnath and then to Drupathi Temple. Before coming up the Sindh Valley, he had also spent one night at Harigawani Temple, about fifteen miles from Srinagar. After extolling the virtues of devotion to Shiva, and moral purity, he illustrated his point by saying that if you were devoted to Shiva you would be able to do *this*: Whereupon the sadhu descended from the rock and stood on the eastern side of it, facing about 15 degrees south of magnetic east with his left side directed squarely uphill. After instructing them to remain about thirteen feet away from him, he inflated his chest, gazed at a point between the eyebrows, gave a push with his feet, and rose slowly to a height of approximately sixty-five to one hundred feet, in a state like that of death.

After about a minute at this height, he slowly descended, hovered once, and finally descended to the ground again. After spending about an hour with these four men, admonishing them not to repeat what they had seen, the sadhu then proceeded on his way to Amarnath, and does not appear to have been noticed by anyone else in Baltal.

Well, of course, this was a *possible* incident, as I said. It wasn't something that I witnessed personally. But I did go back to make a check of the area and found physical evidence of a magnetic episode of some sort. The field was strewn with bits of ferromagnetic material, tin cans and so forth. The net result was that, as a physicist, I was trained enough to use a simple compass to map out the magnetic field that had been left as a trace in those ferromagnetic materials around the spot where the levitation was supposed to have

happened. There turned out to be a dipole field extending out to about forty-five feet in all directions.

The significance of this story, in terms of meditation, however, is the fact that the sadhu is reputed to have looked up toward his *brow*. This probably means that he was focusing on the foveal spot.

If you try to look up toward your brow, you will find yourself looking straight at your own foveal spot; you won't be able to avoid it. The center of the visual field will be right where you are trying to look. This also means that it doesn't matter what direction you look in. Some yoga practices call for looking *up* at the brow. This may work by accident, but it is also possible that you would never really settle in on the inner foveal spot, and might instead be more inclined to look at the brow itself. Other yoga practices tell you to look down at the tip of your nose. That can work too, because the foveal spot will again be right there at the end of your nose when you do it. But you may still fail to center on the foveal spot. It is one thing to look at the end of your nose as an *external* sensory object and quite another to zero in on this *internal* psychoenergetic point.

The side effects from internal foveal spot meditation can involve such a phenomenon as levitation. When the ninth stage of calming the mind has been reached, there is a juncture when extreme purification occurs. It happens in the ninth stage when a velvety darkness is observed. This marks the critical difference between having just an exercise, or a practice meditation, and having an experience where something supernormal is bound to happen. And the first indication that a massive contact with the immortal half of the mind is about to take place is when this absolute blackness occurs. This is also the first real contact that you are making with the Serpent Power. This power itself is beginning to move your consciousness when this takes place. Of course, you're using a very small fraction of your Serpent Power, which normally runs your body (or the lower half of the mind) to try to stimulate the foveal spot in order to access the higher half of the mind, where the real bulk of the Serpent Power is to be found.

The Serpent Power moves very slowly. You can quickly do things with your eyes, but you can't do much quickly with the central power. That is one reason why it has been called the "sleeping goddess." At first it's awfully hard to get anything to move at all; and that's one of the main reasons why, in meditation, it is so difficult to achieve the breakthrough to the ninth stage. It takes a great deal of patient concentration on the foveal spot to actually reach the kindling point of stimulating this part of the mind, or central Serpent Power, also known in Asia as the *kundalini*.

The *kundalini* is divided into three parts: the *left* and *right* (which are associated with the lower half of the mind) and the central part, where this incredible power is located. Physically, this is said to be in the center of the spinal column. In consciousness, it is right along the axis of the mind or along the *visual* axis. So if you're doing meditation that stimulates this central axis, you may not need more than a few minutes to rouse the sleeping goddess a little bit. But it takes several minutes of really skillful foveal spot meditation to get things stirred up.

It must also be stated that the Serpent Power has intelligence. This may seem strange, but this intelligence is really that of the immortal half of the mind. And because the *kundalini* is the power of the immortal half, they simply go together.

The intelligence is significant because that's how such things as levitation can occur in the ninth stage of meditation. Such phenomenal attainments (called *siddhis* in India) manifest because there is an intelligence to the Serpent Power that can bring about a systematic alteration in the usual laws of physics.

In yoga, there is a practice known as *pranayama*, which is a technical procedure in breathing whereby it is intended that the meditator achieve the higher states by using breath control in order to unleash some of the central *kundalini* power. As I said before, I myself never got anywhere with these practices, so I really can't say much about them other than to note their existence. I had results without using these methods because I discovered that proper

breath control is automatically produced when I locked on to the foveal spot. I found that I could affect the midbrain in a way that naturally triggered the correct breathing.

The real purpose for breath control has to do with the fact that there is a one hour or so cycle of oscillation of the nostrils opening and closing on the left- and right-hand sides. I used to think that breath control had to do with breathing in one nostril and then out the other, and so on. But it is actually connected with what is called the "great breath."

The state where the left nostril is more open is known as the "lunar breath" in yoga. The "solar breath" is when the right nostril is more open. Should one achieve equality (or equal balance) between both nostrils, then this is called the "*sushumna* breath," according to the yoga manuals; and this is the important central power of the *great breath*, which is the true purpose of any breath-control technique.

When you reach a perfect balance between both nostrils, you create a kind of a pump that will excite the central channel. Fortunately, it is *not* necessary to concentrate on the breath, which can also be an obstacle to what it's supposed to accomplish. The foveal spot meditation, all by itself, will automatically bring into balance the *great breath*; and by maintaining concentration on the spot in the center of the visual field, you will then trigger the required action of the Serpent Power.

There's an interesting side effect to *pranayama*. In the yoga texts, it is described also as having a beneficial effect on the hiccups. Hiccups result from activity in the midbrain. Now I briefly mentioned the *turned-back tongue*, but didn't say too much about it. The fact is the *turned-back tongue* also helps to get rid of the hiccups. If you invert the tongue and press the bottom of it against the roof of the mouth, you will approach a condition of *khecari-mudra*, which also involves turning back the tongue. *Khecari-mudra* and *pranayama* both eliminate the hiccups because they are one and the same in their effect on the central channel.



I have learned that the tongue inversion helps to maintain alertness when you are trying to meditate on anything. When the inversion of the tongue is done correctly, in just the right position, it has a maximum effect on the *kundalini*. But there is a second technique. Listen to your favorite music (especially with a lot of chord combinations) with earphones (you really need earphones for this, with the volume turned up loudly); then invert the tongue. You should be able to *feel* the vibrations that arise from the sounds directly through the bottom of your tongue as it is pressing against the roof of your mouth. You'll feel it only when the tongue is in the correct position, and that's how you'll know the proper position for meditation as well. Not only will you feel the vibrations of the sound, but you'll experience, with a little relaxation, an extraordinary state of ecstasy and bliss connected with the music. All of a sudden the music will be a hundredfold more beautiful to you. This is a phenomenon of the throat chakra instead of the *ajna* chakra used in meditation.

The *turned-back tongue* technique, however, must not be confused with the "throat lock" (an entirely different yogic practice), where you press down your chin on your chest. This will affect the spine and makes it possible, to some extent, for the central power to ascend through the spinal column. Although I've never used anything but the foveal spot technique, I know that such methods work because my first experience with the opening of the eye occurred when, in sitting down abruptly, I accidentally bounced on the base of my spine and opened the third eye in less than a second.

Each person, of course, has to follow his or her own lights. But my own personal experience involved the astonishing discovery that Tsongkhapa's descriptions of the calming stages of the mind matched my earlier spontaneous experiences. I also discovered (only about five years ago) that the great success of finally settling into the ninth stage for the first time in my life, through meditation, was nothing but an extension of what I call the "three-second *samadhi*." I had experienced this years earlier. All of a sudden one

day, I saw this foveal spot and held it there for a second or so beyond the point where it would normally vanish. I also kept my attention withdrawn from the external world entirely. When years later I finally reached the ninth stage, I realized to my amazement that this was but an extension of the second stage. The three-second *samadhi* was the same in *taste*, as the Tibetan writers might describe it. You locate the foveal spot and then you hold it for just three seconds. It will continue to slip away from you until you've had more practice. You have only to lengthen this short interval of time to several minutes in order to attain a serviceable *samadhi*. Yet it is possible to have a full-fledged *three-second samadhi* because in three seconds you haven't got enough time to fall into error. When you do meditation for any greater length of time, you usually start making mistakes. So, for a second there at least, you'll be able to see what it will actually feel like when you do succeed in holding it for a number of minutes. And a number of minutes is all that is required to achieve the velvety darkness of *prasarabhi*. I think that's very hopeful because it means that a person can know at the outset where they're heading and they can really work toward it.

The foveal spot, however, is not all that easy to always see. When you try to focus on it, and you've got lots of light, you can easily see it. In total darkness, however, it can be difficult to find. But even so, the foveal spot itself is *not* this area that's going to open (hopefully) in the meditation. The real *point* (or star) that you're looking for is hidden in the central region of the spot or lotus, and the only advantage to finding the foveal spot is in being able to focus your attention on an area that at least contains the *true* point. Though it may be invisible, you don't have to see it, fortunately. As you focus inwardly—from the two eyes and from the left and right sides of the body—the Serpent Power irradiates the whole foveal spot area. Part of it, therefore, inevitably hits that true point. The trick is to go through the first stage of calming the mind by simply locating the spot. The second stage involves holding on to it for an extended period of seconds (even if it's not more than two or three

seconds). Then, as soon as you lose it, you bring it back. Your mind has to not only be upon it, but you must also be viewing it with *vividness*, the same kind of vividness that you'd use when examining small print with great care. In short, there has to be a vivid *consciousness* of that spot. You can't do it in an absentminded or distracted way.

The meditation attitude of the mind has to be one of trying to *see*. It's that simple. It doesn't have anything to do with trying to understand or trying to do something with your thoughts. That kind of mental activity is a hindrance. But just trying to see something has an extraordinary power to pierce all the way through to the "clear light" of death itself, which is actually the highest state of consciousness and the real goal of meditation.

You must train yourself to study the details of the foveal spot. Try to see a clear image of what is there. Remember, you're *not visualizing anything*. Something is *already* there; you simply have to see it.

For me, it is sufficient to see a little constellation of points. I can readily fix on those. But, again, this is just a trick; the constellation is not the actual thing that will open up into a third-eye experience. It is an area only where the focusing of the Serpent Power from the bilateral powers of the two eyes is irradiating it—and will affect it.

So that's the second stage, when you hold the spot for two or three seconds. When you lose it, you immediately bring it back. This is the third stage, and is often called the "stability stage" because the *samadhi* is stabilized by repeatedly recovering the focus point. You develop a habit of going back to it again and again. This applies, by the way, to *all* meditation in Tibet, not just to foveal spot meditation.

In the fourth stage, you should never lose sight of the fact that you're really just extending the three-second *samadhi* of the second stage of calming the mind. But here you deliberately reduce the area that you're trying to see. And you have to be careful. The Tibetan

texts warn that if you make the area *too* small, you start exerting so much effort in order to maintain such a tiny region of attention that you become overly excited and your heart will beat too fast. You are then not calm anymore or relaxed enough. So you must find a balance between the degree of relaxation and the vivid awareness of a *minimum* area. Let it grow a little bit if you have to.

By the time you get to the ninth stage, you're not going to be losing the spot anymore; you're going to be stuck right there, and you're going to stay there. You will have reached a sense of comfort, and you will be enjoying this *samadhi* that you are settling into. It is a sensation of being internally and totally concentrated so that you lose all sense of distraction from the external world and the concerns of your mortal half of the mind. No longer is there any sense of struggle or strain. (This is also exactly like the three-second *samadhi*, where you have not as yet had enough time to be strained. And you'll enjoy it just as soon as you see it hang there. You'll suddenly realize, "My, God, I'm doing something I've never done before in my life!" and I'm succeeding with it.) That little constellation of points will start to glow, like embers on a fire. Within a second will come the velvety blackness, and the immortal half of the mind will take over from then on. All you have to do is just keep doing what you've been doing, and the rest will follow through on its own.

I'd like to finish up by reading a portion of an ancient Egyptian text, which I think says it all. It is a direct address to the third eye, and it explains the relationship of the eye to the *seer*, or meditator. The ancient Egyptians had a great reverence for the "eye of Horus" (the third eye). In this instance, they're referring to a deceased king and the spirits of the after-death state. It seems that there is no danger for the king because the "carrier" of the eye is immune to such potentially harmful influences. And, of course, it is true that one can encounter all kinds of entities, or dead "shells," in the astral realms. But this poses no threat to anyone who uses the third eye.

This is my own yogic translation of Utterance 77. It is a

4,300-year-old text that was found in the pyramid of Unis, on the plateau of Saqqara:

Atrophied-Eye, O Atrophied-Eye, where are you? O you who are in the front of the Immortal-Half, where are you? You are in the Immortal-Half, so that you may be set-in-place in the front of the Seer, so that you may cause bliss for him who carries you, so that you may cause to be a Spirit him who carries you, so that you may cause him to be Serpent-Powerful in his (Eternal) Body and so that you may cause respect for him to be in the two-eyes of all Spirits, they who shall look at him or anyone who shall (even) hear his name.

## *Part II*

Lecture 5  
July 18, 1993

It is a strange fact that in art there is sometimes a preservation of some of the most important secrets of meditation over the thousands of years. Often it is here *only* that true knowledge still exists, uncontaminated and undistorted. For instance, one of the oldest of artistic devices in very early Buddhism is called a mandala. The word itself just means a *circle*. The Sanskrit term, or the equivalent of it in Hinduism, is the yantra, which is a diagram like the mandala, but not so often circular, although it can be. Yet as devices in meditation they *both* represent the meditative *visual field*. In other words, the outer boundary of a yantra or a mandala stands for the *actual* outer boundary of your own internal *visual field* during meditation.

Mandalas also have a *point* in the exact center, which is called the *bindu*. This is the basic central point found in the middle of the lotus or foveal spot. The ancient Egyptians call it the "seed" or the "star." But no matter what you want to call it, it is the very point that opens up for the Wisdom Eye or *third eye*.

Other details in a mandala are things that are depicted only in a figurative sense. They are symbols. When you penetrate into the *bindu*, however, all of the symbols stop. You will still see *forms* in the Wisdom Eye experience because you will actually go to certain places on this earth. But symbols as such cease at a definite area in the mandala because that's where our mental activity more or less phases out during meditation. So as we near the *bindu* center, the symbolic references decrease (just as our dream images decrease as



we approach the higher states of consciousness) until they are no longer represented. And furthest away from the center (of the immortal half of the mind) are the levels of the mortal half of the mind. The immortal mind, then, is located in the exact (axial) center of any mandala.

Interestingly, one might think that the Tibetans had copied the ground plan from the ancient Egyptians, for the inside of a pyramid is exactly the same as some mandalas, with the apex in the center (as you look straight down from the top or straight up) and its base shaped into a square. It is surprising to note that this also represents what is called "the mountain of the world" in Asian doctrines, where this *Mount Meru* symbolizes the whole cosmos, while the Egyptian word for pyramid is *mer*, which looks suspiciously like a cognate word to Mount Meru in Sanskrit.

The ascent to the purer states of consciousness (which is the basis for this series of lectures) has to start from this base of Mount Meru and finishes at the apex of *mer*.

The four figures that are typically stationed at each side of a mandala turn out to be the so-called *lower chakras*. The early Tibetans put them at the four cardinal directions as a mystery teaching, connected as they are with the mortal mind and the earth. But the actual location, like that of all of the chakras, is along the spinal column and consequently along the visual axis of the mind. These lower chakras have only to do with the dream state of consciousness, for dreams are part and parcel of the mental (mortal) activity of the mind. The whole area—or *field of vision*—that surrounds the central point (or *bindu*, or *star*, or *seed*) is where the landscapes and figures of our dreams appear to us.

Sleep research has come a long way in the West. It has been discovered that when you dream, your eyes move about in what is termed REM, or rapid eye movement, sleep. Whenever a researcher wants to find out what a subject is dreaming, all he or she has to do is wake the sleeper up when the eyes start moving around. But there is another stage to sleep, known to researchers, where the eyes stop

moving. This is called non-REM sleep. It is believed to be sleep free of any dreams. That's true, as far as it goes. But what researchers don't know is that this non-REM dream-free stage is identical to that special condition I've described when the *prasrabdhi* of threshold visions (or velvety blackness) begins and one is finally making a breakthrough in the ninth stage of calming the mind during meditation.

In completely dream-free and meditative *prasrabdhi* states, your eyes are paralyzed. You really can't move them anymore. Not the slightest movement of the eyes is possible, or desirable, because you are locked onto the *bindu*. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier stages of meditation, where you can look in any direction you please and still see the foveal spot or some waking/dream image. And as long as you can still look in different directions, you have not penetrated into what may be called "access *samadhi*," or the successful entering of the Wisdom Eye. That stage will happen only when the rapid eye movement has ceased.

In meditation, as you are looking at the foveal spot, the entire field surrounding it is a blank, except for various spots of light and texture, which the meditator is always trying his or her best to ignore. But after about an hour of high-quality pinpoint concentration, the spot can vanish or be covered up by threshold visions of the *partially opened* third eye. These visions can be architectural structures, faces, sculptures, or masklike three-eyed guardian deities, which may at times appear to be quite stern. At this stage, you are still able to move your eyes, but unlike the dream state, the visions are *attached* to the center of the visual field and move to wherever you look. And also, unlike the dream state, you are fully alert and can even move your physical body without disturbing these threshold visions. They are very important because they let you know that you are finally doing something right in your meditative approach to experiencing the Wisdom Eye. In fact, they are triggered by your concentration on the foveal spot. Other forms of meditation do not, as a rule, produce this response.

Sometimes, in these threshold visions, the foveal spot will disappear and in its place will be a beautifully clear image, but it may not be very well illuminated; you might even miss it if you're not looking closely. You might even think that it is still the foveal spot, not realizing that the little constellation of points has been replaced with a face or something else! Nothing that is very animated; yet it is extremely stable and not affected in the least by anything that you may think. This is true, by the way, of all threshold visions. The figures do not change; they hardly move at all. They remain solidly fixed to their place, attached to the Wisdom Eye center of your vision, and they will stay there no matter where you turn your eyes.

In the dream state, consciousness can also involve the projection of the astral body, or image body. When you enter into a dream, for example, where the whole background becomes animated, and you believe that you're out of the body and are observing things that are not possible to observe from your sleeping body, then your impressions of separation may actually be true; although many misinterpret these kinds of experiences as "just" dreams. This, of course, is the peculiar thing about any of the four states of consciousness that we happen to be in at the moment. Whether we are in the waking, dream, dream-free or third-eye states, we always have this certainty that whatever we are experiencing must be the only *authentic* reality. We assume right now that this waking state is certainly the most real. But when we are in a dream, quite the opposite is true; we then place little credence in the waking state.

The fact is, however, that we *can* project from the physical body, and you know without doubt that you're doing it as it happens. I experienced this repeatedly when I was a boy. I *knew* that my experiences were no longer within the boundary of ordinary dreams; and I have had this proven to me as fact more than once.

An out-of-body experience is usually something that takes place during sleep, but it can also be induced by meditation. Just as your eye muscles are paralyzed during non-REM sleep, so does your body become paralyzed during astral projection. Every time I re-

turned to my sleeping body, I found myself totally paralyzed for a number of seconds, while struggling to try to move. But the first thing I could move would be the eyelids, then the eyes, and then the rest of my body. It's interesting in this regard, that the first muscles to come under the influence of suggestion by a hypnotist are the eyelids.

Moving past the mental activities of the waking and dream states, we now reach the entrance to higher consciousness. Up until now, I haven't described these states. As you meditate on the *bindu* or *star*—and when all the right conditions have been met—a velvety blackness will take over your visual field. It is a total darkness devoid of any spots of light or textures. Then a glowing from some vestige of the foveal spot will begin to get brighter until it opens out radially. At this time you are still able to sense your particular status or where you are physically. But you're not paying any attention to it anymore because you've got something much more important and interesting to look at. You are fascinated at this stage by what you're seeing, and you really don't want to look at anything else!

The central point within the foveal spot—this now glowing locus in the center of the visual field—opens *radially* from the darkness into a wide, *circular* area with a clearly defined outer boundary. It looks very much like a huge, round television screen. And this screen shows a full-color, live, three-dimensional view of some other location, usually on the earth. This is what happened to me back in 1949.

I was twenty-four years old at the time, and I was visiting a friend of mine who worked out in the Mojave Desert at the Inyokern Naval Ordnance Test Station. He gave me the Cook's tour, showing me all of the entertainments and places you could go on a weekend, including a special track where motorcycle racing took place. Afterwards, we arrived at his Quonset hut. The sun had just set and it was twilight, so the overall lighting was very subdued. My friend sat in a chair opposite me, and I wearily let myself drop into a large wicker chair.

As soon as I hit the chair, I became totally blind. The impact to the base of my spine, I believe, triggered this condition. It was a shock. I was perfectly aware of the chair and where I was, but I couldn't see anything at all.

As I've described, a circular region immediately opened before me. It appeared to have a diameter of maybe five to six feet, and was similar to an enormous, round television screen. I was struck particularly by the outside boundary, which had a blackness to it unlike any black that you can ordinarily see, even at night in the pitch dark. There were no little flecks of light that one normally sees from the retina.

On the inside of this boundary was a wonderfully three-dimensional, full-color, brilliantly lighted view of the location that I had visited earlier in the day—the motorcycle race track. But this was not seen in twilight; I was looking at it in broad daylight. And within this scene, a motorcycle sped straight toward me. There was no sound, however, just a dead silence. The motorcyclist tried to make a turn, lost control, and had a spectacular end-over-end spill. This didn't alarm me very much. I just watched analytically. What was really fascinating me was not what I was seeing, but the way in which the scene was being viewed. My scientific mind had become involved after about forty seconds, and I asked myself, "What about this boundary? What is this soft, velvety blackness surrounding this giant, three-dimensional, living view?"

So I scrutinized this boundary and found that it seemed to measure about one or two inches in width, was slightly out of focus along the inner edge, and became completely out of focus and grayed out into the velvety blackness on the outside. In other words, there was a definite transition within this boundary that framed the "screen," or view.

While this was happening, by the way, I knew that I was experiencing something that would be the turning point of my life. Up until this time, I had been familiar only with the out-of-the-body type of episodes, having experienced perhaps thousands of them

from the age of seven on. But this experience was entirely different. I realized that this was the *real* spirituality that people all over the world were searching for. This was the reality of the potential of the human mind, which was quite beyond the physical brain. And because of my astral projection experiences, which involved the separation of the subtle body from the physical, I understood this third-eye episode as being a separation of the immortal mind from the mortal mind. I also recognized that this circular view was locked into being on the median line of the face and elevated a little bit above the normal plane of vision.

Then, all of a sudden, I sensed that the experience would come to an end in ten to twenty seconds. The power that kept the experience going and the kind of mental discipline needed to preserve it (of which I was ignorant) seemed to be running out. I tried to maintain it, but the whole boundary came inward radially and closed just like it first opened. It *felt* like the closing of an eye, even though no physical eye really closes that way. But that is the nature of the Wisdom Eye. From that first episode through all of my experiences, the eye has always opened and closed radially. Then the velvety blackness returned and I was again totally blind. This lasted for a second or two, and then I could suddenly see my friend again, seated in his chair in the twilight.

I was neither asleep nor paralyzed. I was seated normally, in an alert posture, in full control of my body. What I'd experienced involved no loss of consciousness but was rather a state that makes this waking consciousness seem drowsy and dazed by comparison. It had been a very *vivid* experience that was, I realized, our *true* consciousness.

The entire episode had lasted about fifty seconds. My friend had no inkling of what had happened to me. As far as he was concerned, a minute of silence had elapsed during our conversation and that was all. My eyes had never closed, even though I was temporarily blind to my external surroundings.

Later, I asked him if anything had happened at the race track,

and he said that the week before just such an accident (as I described to him) had occurred. The driver wasn't injured though. But what I'd witnessed in the Wisdom Eye was confirmed as an actual incident that had taken place in the recent past.

The goal of my life (as I've said before) became right then and there to find a way to generate that kind of experience. That's what ultimately led me to India to find out the truth about meditation. Soon after that first third-eye episode, I began to have other spontaneous recurrences from the dream state during sleep, and I had many adventures where I gained more knowledge.

If, when you look at the image (in the eye), you don't resist but just allow yourself to get caught up in it (like audiences do when they identify themselves with the characters and action in a motion picture, for example), you will actually be drawn into the third eye. You don't have to do anything more than continue to look at it and keep your attention fixed upon it. And when you're drawn into it, you'll end up inside the picture, or location. You will then really be in the place. But more importantly, everything that you were in ordinary (mortal) consciousness is somehow concentrated into a single point of awareness. You no longer have the human body that you're used to. You have no arms, no legs. And you're surrounded in all directions by the environment of this locality in the third-eye consciousness. Further, you can see only in one direction at a time, which seems to be dictated by the immortal half of the mind. It will guide you and shift your view to different areas of the location. Yet if you have a strong wish to see something else—originating from your mortal mind, which has somehow been absorbed into this state—you will be granted that option. But this is a difficult thing to do. You must exert a *will* to see in a different direction.

Typically, you will be situated a few feet off the ground, about the normal height as when you stand, but not always. In my case, with an effort of will, I could slowly move off to look in a new direction, just a few degrees one way or another. With continued effort, I could rotate all the way around and see as much as I wanted

to. But I also found that this activity shortened the duration of the experience. Every time the mortal mind started meddling in what was being shown, the length of time would be cut short; and I knew it even before it happened. But you can exert your will to see below you—any detail you choose—or rise into the air hundreds or even thousands of feet above the ground. The eye (your *causal body*) responds to your wishes very slowly, however, and you have to put a lot of effort into it. The entire experience seems to be governed, primarily, by the immortal half of the mind, which is granting you only a small measure of control so that you can learn from it.

Much more can be experienced than just visiting other locations, of course. You can also experience brief moments from former incarnations. And then there are even higher states of consciousness.

In *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* by Alexandra David-Neel, a young lama is described who, by practicing meditation for a long time, managed to enter into the next stage of consciousness. She writes: "Late in the night, and sometimes till dawn, Karma Dorjee remained sunk in a trance, dead to all sensations, to all cogitations [of course, when you enter the third eye, you lose all consciousness of the waking state] . . . seeing himself as on a shore, watching the slowly mounting tide of a white, luminous ocean ready to submerge him."

This is one of those rare, but accurate, descriptions of the first of the *four voids*, or the "white" void. Another book titled *Cloudless Sky* describes a still higher void. The "sky" in the title suggests the next state of higher consciousness, or the "blue" void. The Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism published this book, and while some of it is remarkable, the true information is very widely scattered. But here is a valid part of the text: "Direct experience of the self-existing, primordial, undefiled nature of mind is like a cloudless sky, in which luminosity—the blueness of the sky—exists by itself. Mind is complete in its self-awareness, and self-luminosity, nothing else is necessary."



After describing some details about the experience, the author continues: "This experience is inexpressible in words, and transcends analogies and descriptions. The wisdom of nonthought is the natural and fresh experience of ordinary mind." For Tibetan Buddhists, "ordinary" mind is the immortal mind, or *pure* consciousness.

We'll go into these higher states much more extensively, but for now I wanted you to know that there exist, scattered in books, descriptions of these states. For the most part, however, they are probably inaccessible to most meditators who are not practicing third-eye techniques involving the foveal spot and the *bindu*.

Another book, *Introduction to Yoga Principles and Practices* by Sachindra Kumar Majumdar, has an amazingly accurate description of the blue void, where it "can also be conceived as the limitless transparently blue sky."

There are an astonishing number of details in that sentence. It is a "limitless" void with the color of a blue sky, yet *transparent*.

I can verify the accuracy of these details because in 1950 I entered these same states during two surgery procedures under general anesthesia. This transparency of the blue void is in sharp contrast to another line in this book, where the author says that the white void may be conceived as "an infinite, translucent, white, luminous presence." In other words, he successfully captures this state as a whiteness that *presses* in upon you as an experience.

Beyond the *white and blue* voids is the next state of consciousness, and again, we find the most important secrets about what exists in meditative states in ancient art. In this case, I'm referring to another early Buddhist device called "the Wheel of Life." There are many strange ideas concerning the mysteries that are preserved here, one of the most important being its connection to the *great void*.

The Wheel of Life depicts the law of causation, and one important figure having to do with this goes by the name of *Shinje*. Traditionally, he is supposed to be the Lord of Death. But the Lord of Death is a delightful angel when compared to the reality of that

entity; because *Shinje* is preoccupied with the terrible sufferings involved with this earth life (and with all of the phenomenal worlds) where hundreds of billions of entities (who have not achieved liberation through enlightenment) are bound to the wheel.

## Lecture 6

July 25, 1993

In spite of all the traditional knowledge that exists in parts of Asia and Tibet concerning the meditative arts and the mysteries, the closest that we in the West have come to understanding anything about the higher states of consciousness (experientially) has to do with the comparatively recent documentation and research about the "near-death experience." When people die medically and are then resuscitated, they frequently have reported experiences that, in varying degrees, satisfy them, at least, that they know what's going to happen after they die. It is usually a revelation for such individuals, and it affects them in profound ways. Many acquire surprising psychic abilities. This is due to the fact—as it has long been known in India and Tibet—that death actually takes us to the very highest state of consciousness, and, in effect, allows us to achieve enlightenment. The trouble is, almost nobody remembers this state. Few can recall their *near-death* experiences (the beginning of the ascent), and fewer still can recollect their former lives or their activities between incarnations. After all, we are born in each lifetime with a new body and (empty) brain. Only occasionally will there be some faint memories that may be stirred by the continual functioning of the higher part of the mind, which is *immortal*. Sometimes, when conditions are right, these memories can break through to the mortal half of the mind that we are using now and give us an insight or two.

Meditation, of course, is a technique for accomplishing full

enlightenment while we are still alive and conscious. Why should we wait to die and then not remember anything?

Another factor, however, is that general anesthesia itself—without involving necessarily either a life-threatening situation or even surgery—can provide similar access to the higher states.

About 1950 I had to have dental work done. I had an impacted tooth. And in those days, what they would do is administer a pre-medication that would give you rubber legs just before surgery. Then they'd dispense laughing gas, or nitrous oxide, and put you completely under, not the twilight condition that they put you in today. I had already experienced the opening of the Wisdom Eye one year earlier; and as I said before, I had had a few spontaneous recurrences of it in the dream state. I had thus formulated some metaphysical theories which were combinations of science and Buddhism, and I thought to myself that since I would pass out of waking consciousness during this surgery, I would attempt to maintain visual awareness and make a real effort to ascend to the higher states.

I wanted to really make sure that I went as far as I could go so I breathed very deeply in order to derive the greatest possible use out of the gas. I knew instinctively that it might be possible to test my theories through direct experience and find whatever truth was there. Within two or three inhalations, the sounds in the operating room grew distant. I was looking upward as the gas was given, and my view darkened out with crosshatching patterns until everything vanished. I had full consciousness left, even though my two senses—hearing and seeing—had disappeared. I realized that I would fall into an anesthetic sleep if I did not persist in trying to perceive, in trying to *see*. So that's what I did—very much like foveal spot meditation—even though physical vision had gone. And to my utter astonishment, my field of inner sight immediately began to get quite light, like a white fog. There were no images, but I seemed to

be immersed in a fog, as if I were in the midst of a cloud, flying in a plane. Everywhere was a diffuse white light. I tried to look through it. Of course, in a previous lecture I identified this state as the *white void*, or the first of the four states of higher consciousness.

The gas, meanwhile, was rapidly extinguishing my logical faculty. My mortal mind, in other words, was being anesthetized. And this suppressed my intellect; but to my surprise, my visual experience remained completely intact. This became the one reality beyond the initial darkness. Therefore, I was able to continue trying to see through the white fog, as the nitrous oxide brought to complete death the whole concept of what it even meant to be a human being. It was a near-death experience, in effect. And one of the main things that I realized was that my humanness was vanishing. I realized all of a sudden, with extraordinary clarity, that no matter what anybody has thought in this world, we—as human beings—are *not* this personality. On the contrary, we are another, much more thousandfold powerful, and *real*, entity. C. H. Harvey is a travesty of my own reality; he's just a caricature of the truth. But it is possible to penetrate to that truth, as the mortal brain and mind are removed, so long as you can preserve consciousness or keep your awareness. And it seems that this can be accomplished primarily, or entirely, by just making the effort to see.

Therefore, I struggled to see through this white, enormous void. It was filled with the consciousness of my *real* self, which I felt at that time as the only self that I had. C. H. Harvey was gone, along with all of his memories, his knowledge, his theories. Every concept was obliterated.

Yet somehow I knew that something lay beyond the white foglike void. And it did. Suddenly, I penetrated to an incredible *blue void*. Only much later in my life did I find this state described in some Eastern texts. Oddly enough, I didn't know anything about the void doctrine in Buddhism at that time. Yet I can say with certainty that during those surgeries (two sessions) I went through a succession of the voids and finally entered into a *dark void*.

It was just barely possible to preserve the thread of memory when returning into the brain. I knew beforehand that it would be a battle, and that I would have to grasp at every straw of association linkage in my brain in order to remember my experiences. This was because I knew that these states involved a totally alien level of reality and therefore would only too easily be forgotten upon my returning to this world.

Anyway, those two sessions of surgery changed my life. It was one thing to have a third-eye experience; but it was quite another to be rocketed through the voids and realize from that ascent the ultimate reality about ourselves and the worlds we occupy. I'll be more specific in a moment, but let's back up a little bit first.

In the East, of course, an amazing amount of this knowledge has been put into writing. The information is spread throughout the yogic literature of India and the Tantric writings in general, in both India and Tibet, although with very uneven accuracy over the course of centuries.

Around the middle of the seventeen-hundreds, there was a very strange book produced by a Tibetan, Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro. I say *strange* because he was drawing from much earlier works dating back two thousand years, books that were accessible to Tibetans around A.D. 1000 and some of them as early as A.D. 800. After he wrote this work, it is rather curious the way in which he finished it.

The book is titled, *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Presentation of the Three Basic Bodies—Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth*. We will be concerned only with the *Death* part because this is the ascent from our present state up to the highest state of consciousness. The "intermediate state" is when you are coming down again, or when one is on the way to "rebirth" in their doctrines. To some extent, I think, these ideas have become corrupted through the ages, but the "death" portion of the text is surprisingly accurate in that it agrees with my own anesthetic experience.

The ascent is described by this eighteenth-century scholar as a series of "*dissolutions*." When one dies, the death process is

identical to the meditation sequence. And please understand, I'm not being morbid. The transition that we call *death* actually leads to other realities.

When we die, the physical body and the mental body both die. This is what the author terms "dissolution." The physical body is utterly destroyed, and that is a *full* dissolution. When one undergoes general anesthesia, however, it is not a dissolution but rather a *cessation* of function. Therefore, the word "dissolution" could be thought of in meditation as a "cessation."

The first cessation is that of sight, or "eye sense." Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro is saying that you will begin to fail to see the external world. You will simply go (physically) blind. In its place will be a visual illusion *similar* to a mirage. The second, third, and fourth dissolutions describe a process where one sense after another ceases to function. These are: the "ear sense," the "nose sense," and the "tongue and body senses." In my own experience, this sequence was extremely rapid—all of the senses vanishing within four or five inhalations of the nitrous oxide.

Then something very significant is described during the *fifth* dissolution: "The Mind of the Eighty Conceptions." That particular portion of the mind is what I've been calling the *mortal mind*. In earlier lectures I said that there is an alien quality to third-eye consciousness, that it isn't human. And that begs the question, what is human? The Tibetans are amazing for their systematic nature, and they have laid it all out. They made a complete list of these eighty conceptions, which describe in minute detail all that constitutes being human. And the *fifth dissolution* (either under anesthesia or at death) is a process where one loses every one of these conceptions. You can no longer even conceive of these ideas anymore. You are not able to think in such terms, because the logical mind ceases to function at this stage. The whole mortal mental operation shuts down.

The "Eighty Indicative Conceptions" is a comprehensive, very long list, involving such notions as "desiring an object," or "lack of



desire"; "a mind abiding peacefully" or "an excited mind due to the brightness of an object"; various kinds of *fear*; "adhering," the attachment that we have to a "pleasant object," or "a mind thoroughly holding to objects of the desire realm"; "doubt with respect to virtuous activities"; "desiring food," "desiring drink," "feelings of pleasure," "feelings of pain," and even just "feelings of neutrality"; the distinction that we have in our minds between a "knower" and of "knowing" things and of things that are "known." All such concepts are lost as you leave the mortal half of the mind and enter the immortal half of the mind at the fifth dissolution. This is the dividing line between what are described in the Asian doctrines as the *dual* (or mortal) realm and the *nondual* (or immortal) realm.

These may not be terms that you are familiar with, "dual" and "nondual," but they merely refer to the fact that there are many pairs of opposites, like "joy" and "sorrow," for instance. That's mostly what is meant by duality. And our life on earth—that is, in "the Wheel"—is a *dual* existence.

Other conceptions that are dropped as we enter the *nondual* consciousness are such ideas as "shame," "a mind analyzing what is suitable and unsuitable," or even "wishing for separation from suffering," because you no longer are suffering when you are in the immortal half of the mind. Even "joy" as an experience ceases to be a reality. This may seem astonishing to you, and you may well ask (upon reading such an imposing list which appears to include *everything*) what can possibly be left to us?

Well, you do maintain vivid awareness and vivid thinking. This happened to me under general anesthesia. It's an experience that far surpasses in intensity anything that you can experience now in the waking or dream states. You are aware of the fact that all of these indicative conceptions are melting away, even though you are no longer able to think, as we conceive of the ability to think. You simply enter these states with a *nondual awareness*.

The Serpent Power is what feeds or maintains these conceptions, because you can't have any form of consciousness without

"the sleeping goddess" underlying it. And after listing all of the conceptions in his book, Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro writes: "The mind of the eighty indicative conceptions and the wind which serves as its mount must dissolve prior to the radiant white appearance because its mode of apprehension and that of the mind of appearance are discordant."

What he's explaining here is that the power that sustains the eighty conceptions as consciousness must be withdrawn before a new consciousness, or *white* appearance, can occur. In Tibetan terms, the "wind," besides being the air element, is also used alternatively for the Serpent Power. There are different kinds of wind. There are winds that are strictly for the breath; but other classifications are divided up in the *secret mantra* Tibetan techniques. The metaphor being used here, according to this author, is that the wind is necessary as a "mount" so that one can ride, or experience, a consciousness.

Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro is really pointing out that there's a considerable difference between intellect, or the consciousness of the mortal half of the mind, and *thinking*, or the consciousness of the immortal half of the mind. Everything having to do with the intellect must be gone before it is possible to experience the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth dissolutions (or cessations) of the "short path" to enlightenment.

Furthermore, he says that since "there is a great difference of coarseness and subtlety between these two, coarse minds such as those of the eighty conceptions cannot exist at the time of (the white) appearance."

Once you are in the white void, or white appearance, you are aware of nothing else. It doesn't particularly bother you because you've lost the capacity to be fearful or even a little anxious. You are, as a matter of fact, deeply interested in it. You also want to see through it, since you are vividly aware that this foglike whiteness is still an obstruction. You feel as though you are in the midst of a very thick white fog that is pressing right down close to you, and you

can't see past it. I was using the foveal spot technique for meditation just prior to this experience, and that is what made it possible for me to go beyond this state instead of lapsing into unconsciousness. When the eighty conceptions are gone, most people do fall unconscious; but I clung tenaciously to *trying to see*. I realized that I couldn't keep on thinking or reasoning, but I found that I could continue to see; that ability was untouched by the anesthetic in spite of the loss of the *sense* of physical sight. It's a weird experience and it is called in this book "the empty." "The empty" is being devoid of the eighty conceptions.

In Garma Chang's *Teachings of Tibetan Yoga*, Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro's "the empty" is described as the "Initial Void." It says that it is similar in some way to moonlight. One can get the wrong impression from that analogy, but the author is not really saying that the void is like real moonlight. Instead, he's saying that it is like the brightness of the moon's disk. He is simply referring to its *white appearance*, in other words, and how bright it seems to be. And full-disk moonlight is very close to the impression I got of this white fog's brightness when I was in it. The void is not blindingly bright, but has a uniform degree of brightness, which is exactly like the light within a white puffy cloud when you are flying through it in an airplane.

Another ability that you still possess in the higher states is a sense of the passage of time. As I was struggling to see beyond the fog, I knew it was taking a certain amount of seconds. This time consciousness gives you the illusion, at least, that perhaps a minute or so goes by during this entire experience.

The next cessation, or state of consciousness, comes suddenly. The transition is almost instantaneous, just as though you flew out of a cloud and into a sunlit blue sky. It says in this text that it is called "the very-empty," because it is empty of even the white appearance. The texts from the Gelugpa order of Tibetan Buddhists call it a "red increase," or sometimes "orange" in color. The translators, by and large, can't figure out this discrepancy. But the actual

experience is in agreement with another text, *Cloudless Sky* by the Kagyu order, which quotes a much older work. It says: "This is the self-existing nature, undefiled by experience. Like the center of a cloudless sky, the self-luminous mind is impossible to express. It is wisdom of nonthought beyond analogy, naked ordinary mind." This is what I call *direct experience*. The Tibetans interpret "direct" as a nondual experience.

But why, if the Kagyu text describes this "self-existing, primordial, undefiled, nature of mind" as "a cloudless sky, in which luminosity—the blueness of the sky—exists by itself," is it called a "red increase" by the Gelugpa order? How could this mistake ever happen?

I think that this is indicative of the fact that through the thousands of years there have been very few actual experiencers of these higher states. And I suspect that those who did experience these things may well have not been in positions of power to even write books. Once you've had an experience like this, you might not even undertake the necessary studies to rise through the ranks of the various monastic orders.

In any case, the "red increase" is seriously at variance with other texts; or, perhaps, it is a deliberate attempt to conceal the truth with a "blind" by simply declaring the opposite color. Red-orange, after all, is the complementary color of cyan-blue, which is very close to the blue color that you actually see in the sixth dissolution.

Then again, there could be another reason for the red color association. During my second ascent under anesthesia, I noticed that just at the beginning of my reentry into the blue void, there were some tinges of orange. That might be the source of the confusion. But certainly, the main experience is that of a *blue* void, as perfectly described in the Kagyu text.

The term *increase* is used here because there is a *sudden extreme vividness*, the author explains, like sunlight—*bright* sunlight. And the blueness is almost identical to that of a sunlit blue sky. There is

also nothing else in that void but this blue. You are surrounded by it; it is below you, above you, all around you.

Yet I assure you that, although this can be described as *like* a blue sky, it's not really the same. There's something else that is totally different, something much more fundamental, having to do with the ultimate nature of mind itself. By the way, in the list of eighty conceptions, nowhere does it include the ability to perceive color. This is because you never lose that capability.

In fact, there's a surprising number of things left to your consciousness. In addition to perceiving color and having an awareness of the passage of time, you are also aware of *direction*. You're aware of *space*, or *emptiness*. In the white void you are intensely aware of your own *individuality*, or your genuine nature beyond mere personality. Indeed, at that stage there isn't another entity in the whole universe in so far as you are concerned.

But the blue color is actually a characteristic of the nature of mind itself and must not be confused with our mortal conception of color. And it must also be said that in Buddhism, this blue-void consciousness is what they call *nirvana*, which, as you probably realize, is the aim of most Buddhists. It is also the *dharmakaya* state. The Tibetan mystics suggest, in fact, that when a meditator is having difficulty shedding the eighty conceptions, he should lie on his back and stare up into the blue sky. The intent here is to try to convert the sky blue color to the reality of the blue of nirvana. They are two different things however; and although in meditation it may be helpful as a training method, it is not the same, for the basic reason that the void state is a nondual experience, having nothing to do with the duality of the phenomenal world.

Although you are seeing what seems to be "blue" (or a thing that seems to be perceived by you as an objective experience), this is really not the case. The blueness represents the actual consciousness that you are experiencing and is therefore not separate from you. The blue, then, is the mind itself.

In the white void, your individuality was everything, but in the

blue void you *know* that you are not alone. Here, in the sixth dissolution state, every Buddha who ever achieved nirvana is present. I can tell you from my own experience that you know that this field of consciousness includes the countless other creative beings who underlie the phenomenal universe. You also are very comfortable merging with these beings; yet, at the same time, you preserve your own individuality. You are now in a kind of cosmic mind realm, which is shared with other consciousnesses besides your own.

It has taken me forty-four years (since 1949) to try to come to terms with these experiences, and one somehow must relate all of this to some kind of association with our rational, logical, mortal way of thinking. The truth is, that no one can understand reality without experiencing it directly, either through meditation or through some form of dissolution.

## Lecture 7

August 1, 1993

When one actually ascends into the immortal half of the mind, or to the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth dissolutions (or cessations), and retains consciousness, this is what is known as opening the Wisdom (or third) Eye. This can happen spontaneously, by "grace," or through the skill and practice of meditation. You actually do enter a *causal body*, which seems to be a *point of awareness* and not at all like our mortal earth bodies. But when you're in that causal body, you are perfectly happy with it; you don't feel any need for the arms or legs that you were familiar with.

Yet within this causal body is another even more refined, or subtle, body. You can shed the causal body and enter into a still higher *great causal body* of consciousness. This enhanced awareness is associated with full enlightenment throughout the Buddhist world and in many Indian texts as well.

The phrase "short path to enlightenment" is famous throughout Tibet, where it is called *lam chung*. It is revered because this "straight upward path" (as it is also called) is an ascent in consciousness along the spinal axis and is a method for attaining the highest state—not only within one's lifetime, but possibly within just a few years. This contradicts other beliefs that hold to the premise that enlightenment is not possible except after many, many lifetimes of devout practice.

The *short path* comes from certain Tibetan teachings about the four voids. They are what the secret path is all about. And the secret

ascent really begins at the point where you enter the fifth cessation (and into the immortal half of the mind). In order to do that, the lower states of consciousness (or the mortal half of the mind) must become paralyzed in some way. One after another of the eighty conceptions of what it means to be a human being must undergo dissolution (at death) or cessation of function (during meditation), but it makes no difference which method it is because the Tibetan and Indian texts agree that the pattern for making such an ascent is identical in both cases.

The book that I've been using here is remarkable, *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Presentation of the Three Basic Bodies—Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth*. The information in it—taken originally from an ancient Tibetan text—could have only been acquired from those who actually experienced the advanced states of consciousness. There were those few in the last thousand years or so who were able to bring back the tale and set it down in writing for the benefit of scholars and translators, who have been puzzled and confused by it ever since. The compiler, at the very end of this book, says: "This was collected from the speech of the excellent by the lazy Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro and was written down as a reminder for himself." The author, then, knew the real value of this material and could not consider it but with a measure of humility and humorous recognition of his mortal limitations.

Besides describing the void states, this text also endeavors to explain what's going on with the Serpent Power in the body, even though the physical body is paralyzed, for the chakras are still active along the spinal axis. These are the centers of consciousness that exist along the axis of consciousness and coincide with the (physical) spine. And even while the eighty indicative conceptions are gone, there is still something happening with the basic three parts of the Serpent Power. Remember that the Serpent Power has a *left* and a *right* component (on either side of the spinal column) with a primary *central* current. Therefore, with regard to the fifth dissolution, or white void, the text states: "... all the winds in the right

and left channels above the heart have entered the central channel through its upper opening." And:

Through the force of this, the knot of the channels at the top of the head is loosened, and, since the white drop obtained from the father—which has the aspect of the syllable *ham* upside-down—has the nature of water, it comes downward. When it arrives on the top of the six-circled knot of the right and left channels at the heart, the radiant white appearance arises. Thus, this is not a case of an appearance of moonlight and so forth shining from the outside.

This is, therefore, something that happens within the mind only.

Now we reach the sixth dissolution, which was discussed last time as the blue void, and Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro writes: "After that, the mind of appearance as well as the wind that serves as its mount dissolves into the mind of increase. When the mind of increase dawns, a red or orange appearance, empty and vacuous but much clearer than before, shines like an autumn sky, free of defilement and pervaded by sunlight." And he goes on to explain that this appearance is not a case of illumination by the sun in an external sky. "It is called increase of appearance (because of being very vivid like sunlight) and 'the very-empty' (because of being devoid of the mind of appearance as well as the wind that serves as its mount)."

In other words, this white fog of the fifth dissolution suddenly vanishes as you seem to emerge into the blue void. It happens all at once. But, of course, this is only a visual description, which does not take into account the consciousness aspect of the experience. I said that it was a nondual state, and this is consistent with many texts that refer to it as being a union between yourself and an immense host of other entities—primordial, cosmic entities—that are of a distinctly spiritual type, or what we would call "good" in contrast to "evil." But this consciousness is essentially indescribable because it is simply alien to the mortal half of the mind. There is nothing alarming about it, however, or frightening in any way. You sense



having within your grasp, and control, all that takes place in the physical world, due to the fact that you have a fundamental understanding of the nature of the universe. And your individuality (surprisingly enough) is still preserved, even though you are united with these other beings. You are united, and yet *they* are separate. Still, you function with them as *one mind*, one cosmic mind.

Well, this is the best that I can do to describe this experience, and it's accurate as far as it goes. Now let's get up into the seventh dissolution, called "the mind of near-attainment" in this text. Sometimes it is called the "darkness radiant appearance of near-attainment." You will at once perceive the inherent contradiction, since it is hard to imagine how "darkness" and "radiant" could possibly go together. Nevertheless, the text reads: "After that, the mind of increase together with the wind that serves as its mount, dissolves into the mind of near-attainment. During the first part there dawns a vacuous black appearance, like an autumn sky free of defilement and pervaded by the thick darkness of the beginning of night." Here I think the author is just implying that it is dark, but not completely. One can still refer to it as radiant because the so-called autumn sky is giving off its own light, yet at a very, very subdued level. This might be described as "less than dusk." The darkness is well below that of twilight and almost the same as a night sky would be with starlight, but without the stars.

As the text approaches the eighth dissolution, or the "clear light of death," or "the all-empty," the descriptions become less precise. They delve into the behavior of the Serpent Power in the spine and describe "near-attainment" as the seventh dissolution, or "the great-empty," since it is "near" or approaching the final state of enlightenment, which is the "clear light" of death. And it concludes by saying that the eighth dissolution is "the all-empty" (because of being devoid of the eighty conceptions, and of appearance, increase and near-attainment as well as of the winds that serve as their mounts). It is actual death." In meditation this is full enlightenment.

And this is all they tell you about "the great empty" or great void. But there's a lot more to it than that! What must be understood, though, is the relationship between the great void and the Buddhist Wheel of Life. In this regard it is necessary to know that the Wheel of Life is more than a symbol for all mortal existence, because you actually *see* the real wheel when you are in the great void. You understand what it truly means. The Maitraya-Nia Upanishad says: "Those who are liberated look down upon the *samsara* as upon a dizzily revolving wheel." When they speak of being liberated, they are referring to this ascent into the dark and great voids, for the only method of attaining them is by dissolving all attachments to the mortal half and, in so doing, removing yourself from earthly sufferings.

Another description comes from the Yoga-Bhashya, which says that "this world wheel, which turns due to the power of spiritual ignorance, has six spokes," and it gives a listing of these spokes.

Let's study this Wheel of Life for a moment. In the center of it there is a pig, and in his mouth is a snake and a peacock. The pig represents ignorance, or simply *not knowing*. The snake symbolizes the aversion for things you don't like. The peacock represents the attraction for what you do like. Both animals are linked to the desire principle, which binds all beings to a ceaseless movement in their lives through various portions of this Wheel of Life.

The wheel is divided into different parts. Again, this is nothing but a symbol. The average Buddhist believer, however, takes it all literally. He thinks that there are realms where only animals live or realms where "hell-beings" dwell and other places for the so-called "hungry ghosts," who are tormented by huge stomachs and tiny mouths. Then there are the abodes or levels of humans, gods, and demigods. Yet behind these symbolic representations is a *real* wheel of worlds in the great void. Here you actually see a polarization of an unhappy hell-being end of it and a relatively happier god-being end of it, not perfectly ideal, but nevertheless happier. You have this impression—as just stated in the Sanskrit text—of looking down

upon it and seeing the entire wheel below you. And for reasons that seem natural to you at the time, you recognize this polarization. You observe the actual positions of the worlds in space. The number of these worlds in some texts is six, but what I saw was seven. For me there were seven *stations*, or dissolving *points*, of the worlds, which were rigidly fixed in space. I have a chemist's background, and I'm used to thinking of structures of molecules and so on; and when we have in chemistry an arrangement in space of centers of any kind—like atoms or molecules—there's a vibration and it wiggles around. But what I saw in that great void were seven *rigidly* positioned points, or locations, in space. And these points were the centers of the seven worlds making up the wheel; and the turning of the wheel was, in fact, an obligatory rotation of living beings around the Wheel of Worlds. But the worlds themselves didn't turn. Rather, a vast multitude of beings was passing around and around and incarnating in all seven stations of life in the same clockwise direction that is indicated in the Tibetan Buddhist Wheel of Life.

You can interpret the various conditions that are shown in the wheel—the animal realm, the hell-being realm, and so forth, as being symbols of the varying degrees of happiness, contentedness, and misery, where waves of beings travel in a clockwise direction, starting from a godlike state and then descending to a demigod state, and then to a more animal-like condition. One entire side of the wheel is dedicated to this *descent*. It is a fall into less and less desirable worlds, as each of us is born and reborn through the ages. This is in a vast time scale. Hundreds of billions of beings are incarnating and reincarnating in this series of worlds; and they are forced to do this by a basic drive of causation, which the entity Shinje (Lord of Death) enforces. All humanity must pass round and round this chain of worlds; and when the bottom of the *descent* is reached, there is an agonizing wrench of suffering *en masse*.

Here, I must explain something. As an experiencer of the great void, the mass of entities suffering was not separate from me, even though I was invulnerable to any kind of harm myself. Looking down

on the world, in other words, I perceived those beings as if they were the fingers of my own hand. I felt and sensed literally everything that they were experiencing. Not that I suffered in the mortal way, but rather I recognized the suffering as *our* suffering and *our* agony—particularly as we pass around the bottom of the chain in order to begin the ascent. I witnessed about seven of these revolutions, and always there was the crack of the whip as humanity made the turn in the Tibetan Buddhist hell world.

In Tibet you can't go anywhere without encountering a recognition of this direction of rotation through the worlds. When you come to a temple stairway, you must always *climb* the stairs on the left-hand side; and when you go down, you must *descend* on the right-hand side. This is not just a traffic regulation; it signifies reverence for the basic law of the Wheel of Life.

On my last trip to Tibet, I visited the Ganden monastery, which was Tsongkhapa's residence. There was a pathway encircling the establishment, and a constant pilgrimage of people moved around it clockwise. I saw the same thing at the Potala in Lhasa. The pilgrims there wouldn't think of going around the little mountain in any other way but in a clockwise direction. And the prayer wheels are always turned clockwise.

In the great void there are countless such wheels. The consciousness that can look down upon the worlds can also stop looking and become aware of the boundless surrounding matrix of space itself. This is where the *unmanifested* realm is experienced in the "clear light of death."

Now, what does that leave us with? What can we say about this? Fortunately, a lot, because one thing that I haven't mentioned about these states is that as you ascend there's a considerable role played by something called *déjà vu*, a French term that means "already seen." If, for example, we go to a place we've never been and have the distinct impression that we've already seen it or are familiar with it, this is *déjà vu*. And it is characteristic of the ascent into higher consciousness (in ever increasing intensity) that we've

been through this before. You think to yourself, *My god, I've been here countless times before! I know all of this!*

But the feeling of being there before is difficult to describe because it is a state of intense *divine* (for want of a better word) consciousness.

My experience of the great void during my second session of surgery under anesthesia has really haunted me ever since. Forty-four years have gone by, but it's there, always, in my memory. I can never shake it. I knew I had reached this state of death in the *same* great void countless times before, from beginningless time, and in countless worlds. I knew that I was incredibly old, billions of years old, going back even before the birth of the worlds. You realize that you've died over and over and over again, and that these deaths are connected with the wheel. You keep getting stuck to the wheel, so you continue to die and get reborn over and over.

Of course you *can* get out of the cycle, according to the doctrines in Buddhism. You can, at least, find a *temporary* respite, although Buddhists imagine that it can be permanent. You can enter nirvana, or the blue void, for millions of years or longer. But it is only a vacation, because after what they call "the wind" (or the power that maintains your consciousness in that state) begins to die out—after the karmic causes that brought you into that state die out—you tend to get thrown right back onto the wheel again! Unless you keep working on your spiritual elevation, you will only have temporary vacations. And when I was in the great void, I knew without doubt that I'd never had a permanent respite and was never going to get one.

Actually, the whole point to Tibetan Buddhism is to develop compassion for humanity and to do what one can to help out. It is not the aim of northern Buddhists to simply enter nirvana. They believe that they should renounce nirvana, and that's basically what I was doing. In my second ascent to the blue void, I thought to myself: *This doesn't explain the plight of humanity. This doesn't explain all that's happening in the world.* Sure it was idyllic, but it didn't satisfy

me as to what the real problems were with existence. But the great void did answer those questions—as it would for anybody who experiences it.

The northern Buddhists also recognize the path of the *Buddha of Compassion*. They believe that the best thing for anybody in meditation to be aiming for is to *learn* from the experiences in the four voids so that one may ultimately return to assist humanity.

You have to realize that such an experience changes all of your values. But even having acquired this kind of knowledge, you still come back to earth saddled with a physical body and a stupid brain. I can assure you that you pay a price for having had direct experience. Many of your fondest and most cherished illusions are destroyed beyond resurrection. It alters your whole way of living and not necessarily as you might wish. You see, now you *know* the way things really are, and never mind whether it's going to be convenient or comfortable for you on a daily basis.

On the other hand, many of your former fears no longer exist. Many ambitions that would normally have tormented you are simply not important anymore. And, in the last analysis, our most fundamental and deep-seated fear of death has little or no hold on anybody who's been through all of the dissolutions—and comes back to tell the tale!

Lecture 8  
August 8, 1993

The analysis of the states of consciousness—from the waking state to the dream, the dream-free, and the fully enlightened states of consciousness (and the bodies that they are experienced in: the physical body, the mental body for the dream state, and the causal and great causal bodies for the third-eye states)—is typically Indian, not Tibetan as such. But it is honored in Tibet, and the clearest explanation for it that I've ever seen is in a book that I referred to briefly called *The Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon. His real name was Sir John Woodroffe; an Englishman who went "native" back in the early days of this century. Sir Woodroffe became completely absorbed in the study of Asian ideals and developed into an amazingly sensitive translator of the Sanskrit works. As the title of the book would indicate, there is much in it about the Serpent Power. Yet it is so symbolic that even the experts in India don't know where the symbols end and where reality begins. The text will discuss, for example, how the chakras follow the spinal column; but you wouldn't know that they are in the center of your *thoughts* unless you made the deduction on your own. And as I said earlier about the chakras, the spine is only the *physiological* location for what is actually *experienced* in the central point in mind space during meditation. What all of these works fail to emphasize is that the physiological location is *not* the consciousness location. The chakras are actually straight before you along the visual axis in the very center of the visual field. As a matter of fact, the axis is not just

straight in front of you, but it is wherever you happen to look. In other words, it is always in front of your *inner sight*. The center of the visual field is an axial line that passes through all of the chakras and connects consciousness all the way through to the higher states.

Every one of the chakras—from the throat, to the heart, to the navel, and down to the sexual center at the base of the spine—have long been known to be centers of consciousness. They are often used as synonyms in the Old Kingdom Egyptian texts for the center of the visual field. The “throat” of something, for instance, is a *center* of something. The “heart” of something is the *midst* of something. My own experiences confirm the truth of this view, in sharp contrast to the extensive intellectualizing that’s been done in India about the chakra doctrine with all of its symbols.

Avalon’s *The Serpent Power* is full of valuable information, however, and there is, unquestionably, truth in it, although much buried behind symbolism. If it wasn’t for my understanding of the *literal* meaning of the Egyptian texts, which use fewer symbols, I might never have figured out many of the details. I hope to soon publish my own yogic translation of the Unis pyramid texts, which will demonstrate that the ancient Egyptians carved in limestone profound teachings about the nature of reality along with a complete set of instructions on how to open the third eye. It can even be argued, quite convincingly, that their whole civilization was founded on this pursuit. For them, apparently, the activation of the eye was a matter of some urgency. It says, for example, in Utterance 81: “You sit, O Third-Eye, in-front-of the Seer as his god, so that you may open his path to-the-fore among the Spirits. . . .” In other words, this dot, in the center of the visual field, was considered to be that important. It was not merely a focusing point for meditation purposes; it sat in front of the seer as *his god*.

The ascent through the meditative states that I have been describing—through all eight dissolutions—is most easily made, in my experience (and confirmed also in the Egyptian texts), by a skillful handling of the foveal spot, or the *thousand-petal lotus* as it

is called in India. Sometimes I think I can talk about the foveal spot for quite a long while with nobody really understanding what I’m going on about. But everybody, without exception, has one because that spot is the visual evidence of the center of the retina. That spot is where there are mostly cones in the nerve endings. The foveal spot, as an image, is produced by those cones, in contrast to surrounding rods. So it is *physical fact*, and not something that needs to be visualized or imagined.

The very center of the foveal spot is what’s called the *bindu* or the “dot” in the middle of a mandala, which is a meditative device. This center may be thought of as the middle of the visual field. A mandala’s outer circle is then like the *entire* visual field circumference around the center, and the *very* center represents the *central point*, or the *axial line*, of consciousness.

I don’t know how many of you have ever done any target shooting. Maybe that seems a little bit off our subject here, but target shooting is closely related to the skillful handling of foveal spot meditation. For example, if in target shooting you are attempting to get the *smallest* possible group of hits on the target, this is very much the same as what you are trying to do in meditation. And like target shooting, you simply can’t hit the center all of the time. You’re limited by your own abilities.

In meditation, the area of the foveal spot that you can successfully rest on without getting too tense depends entirely upon your degree of skill and practice. And even though you can seek out the center of the foveal spot, just as you would the center of a target, the fact is, you might find that it would be better if you selected a slightly larger area, rather than the exact central pinpoint.

I must again emphasize that you must *seek out* the center, as this has absolutely nothing to do with *visualizing* anything. Indeed, the *bindu* is there whether you are able to see it or not.

When you shut your eyes during meditation, your concentration on *any* point will automatically put you at the center of the foveal spot. It is impossible, in other words, to make a mistake. As



long as you fix your attention on it and it *doesn't move off to one side*, then you are assured of being focused on the center. It is essential, however, that the point remains stationary. Any other speck or dot that wavers around or travels to the side tells you immediately that you are not looking at the center of your visual field. And if you try to lock on to it, you'll just be chasing it around and getting nowhere. So you can use this as a test by picking out any little point of grainy light that you might see. If you find that it stays put when you stare at it, then you can be sure that you've located the central point. In this way you can experimentally find the center even without seeing the foveal spot or its midst.

The ancient Egyptians had a very penetrating idea about what it means to *see* anything. The verb "to see" in Egyptian can be interpretively understood as meaning "to be in (a thing) to some extent." When you look at anything generally, your consciousness actually moves into it; you are fundamentally, at least partly, *in* it. This tells us exactly why the foveal spot meditation works, because in order to reach the center of the mind, you must look at the central point; and in so doing, you are *entering* the mind. Your consciousness is actually entering the axial line in mind space.

Along with this target-shooting analogy, it's important to also note that we've got *two* eyes, like two guns in a turret. In World War II, I was trained as an aerial gunner and we had such two-gun turrets in the B-17 bomber. They were computer driven, but the sighting arrangement was a *circle* with a *dot* in it. All you had to do was to move some gun grips and the two guns would be aimed by the computer to hit wherever the little dot was located in the optical field viewer. The same principle is at work in foveal spot meditation. When you look with your two eyes, then your consciousness is moving toward the target. It is like shooting it with your awareness. A portion of the Serpent Power actually leaves the physical part of the mind when this happens.

When you look at me standing here, you are really shooting me from your eyes. This accounts for the definite feeling, when

you're young especially, that there is a real power that comes from people's eyes. This is not a matter of paranoia or a psychological illusion, in other words. What the meditator does is to deliberately turn that power in upon the mind itself. Instead of looking at the external world, he is directing that same Serpent Power *within*. Just by looking at a target, we are firing from our two eyes.

Striking the target is a very definite experience. When you really hit the central point and successfully lock onto it, you will suddenly be aware of the fact that your consciousness—which *was* with your mortal half—is *now* in that point. You will realize that you can stay there in your mind and you will be content to remain in that state, with no interest or concern about the external world.

I can attest to the fact that every single one of you has had at least one third-eye experience. How do I know? Because that is what everybody experiences at birth.

Just before we take our first breath as a newly formed infant, we are in the Wisdom Eye. Unfortunately, however, the eye closes at the moment we enter the new body with its empty brain. All the consciousness that we've experienced in the past (all of our former lives included) is snuffed out within a second or two. We can't remember a thing. And we won't remember anything until we reopen the eye.

For most of humanity, the Wisdom Eye will only open again at the moment of death. Therefore, in a very real sense, most of us go through our whole lives *blind*. Failure to meditate means, in other words, that we accept this blindness.

In our time, among the human race generally, the third eye has undergone an atrophy. The Egyptians said this four thousand or more years ago. It is in a deplorable state. And like an arm or a leg, if a person doesn't use it, he will eventually lose it altogether. Fortunately, the eye is not dead but still there, still accessible. But just as physical therapy is not usually an enjoyable process, third-eye therapy—which is what meditation is—has its ups and downs, although not nearly as painful. The eye, of course, differs from a

muscle in that it is an organ of *sight*. So instead of trying to move an atrophied muscle, you are struggling to *see*. And in attempting to see the central point, you are recovering your ability to use the eye.

In other words, the third eye is there for us to reactivate, if only we will make the effort. We must devote at least an hour to meditation every other day, as a bare minimum. If we can do more, fine. I suggest that if it is possible to regain the use of an atrophied muscle in less than a year, then it is, in all likelihood, possible to regain the use of the Wisdom or Prajna Eye in even less time. But it's up to us.

We don't have to accept our blindness.

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